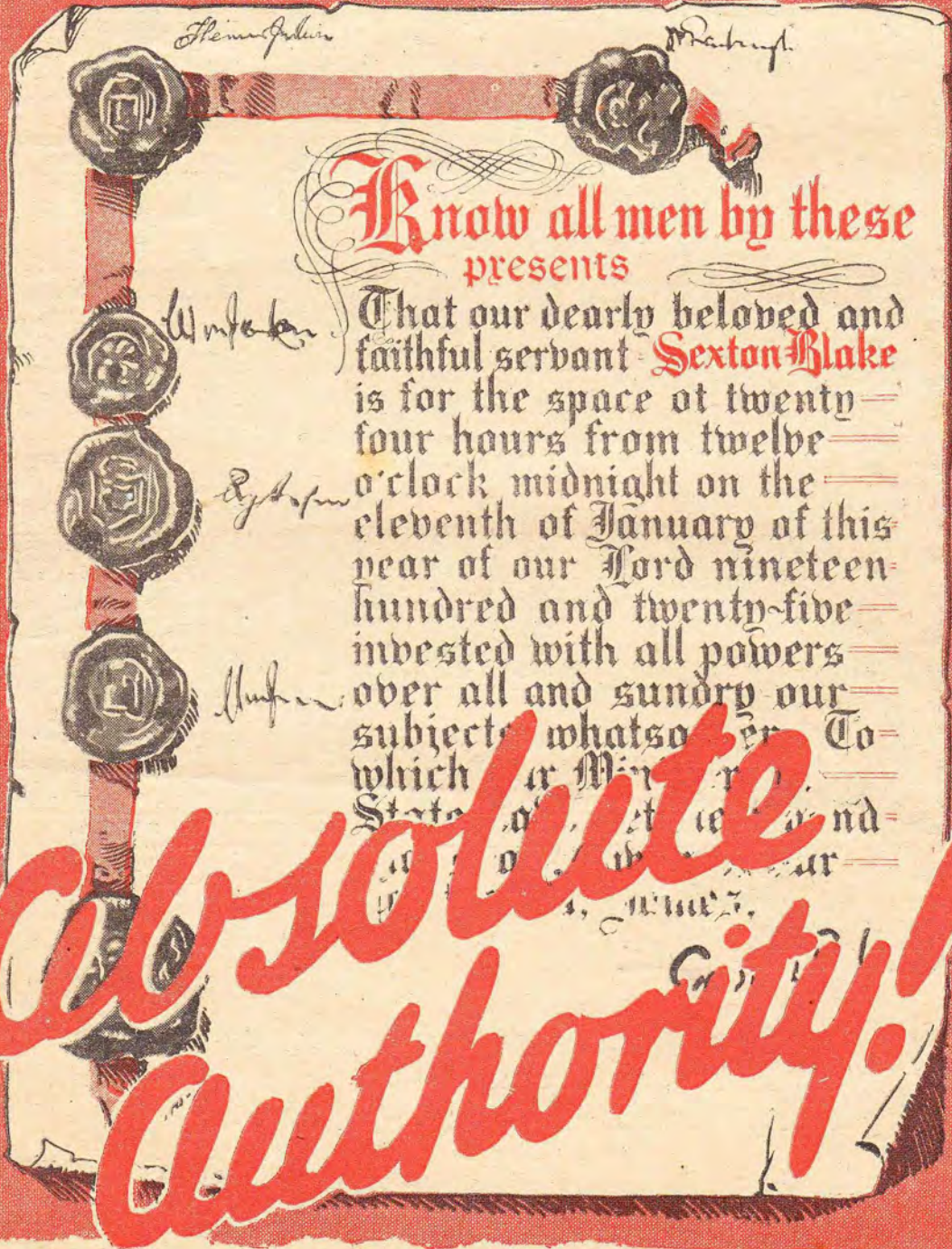


£4,300 in PRIZES offered!

THE UNION JACK 2

SEXTON BLAKE'S OWN PAPER.



ZENITH the ALBINO—SEXTON BLAKE! Complete in this issue.

"Rockets, eh?" said Joe Juniper.

"Why?"

"Jump about with the grub there, Tommy!" called Bob towards the forepeak. "Don't stop to make anything hot. Ront out some cold tack. Now, skipper, sit ye down on the port locker with Jim. Tommy and I will take the starboard. We can talk while we're eating—or, better still, start in now."

"Now, skipper," he said, "let's get down to brass tacks. The fog might be lifting, and we've got to get busy and think out our next move." He reached up to the rack that was fitted to the forward end of the cabin and took down a chart, which he opened and spread on the table between them.

"Here we are," he said, putting his finger on the spot where they lay at the entrance to the creek, "this is their only way out. They've got to pass us if they want to get into the open. Now what use can we make of that?"

"Not much, maybe," grunted Joe Juniper, "secin' the channel's half a mile wide at low water. If they were minded they could sneak out a couple o' fathoms away from us in this weather."

"But there's no wind," objected Jim. "She's got sail, remember, and—"

"Hah!" ejaculated Joe. "She's got auxiliary power, too, if that's news to ye."

"Power!" gasped Jim incredulously. The two cousins looked at each other blankly. This news, if it were true, altogether altered the complexion of the situation. If Griff decided to go after the daring invaders who had despoiled him of his dinghy and a costly motor-boat, he could do so now without waiting for a wind. The only things against it were the size of the Vanderveide and the big risk of piling her up on some sandbank in the fog. Against that was the equally big risk that while the

crew of the Happy Days was free danger ever lurked at the elbows of Griff & Co.

Actually, the reason for the non-appearance of the Vanderveide—which could have arrived by this time had Griff taken the chance of pushing her through the fog—was quite a different one. They were engaged in a search for Maxim Smirnov. They believed that he had merely gone overboard, but he was dead in the ooze of the inlet's floor even as they sought.

"We've got to think what we would do in their place," said Bob. "Question is: Are they going to try and get us, or go all out to get away themselves? What about their gun-running? Are they going to try another trip to the derelict with another consignment, or not? But, I say, skipper, you've had the benefit of their company since we have. Maybe you've heard something? And how was it they got hold of you, anyway?"

"Maybe I was waiting for a chance to tell you," retorted Joe, puffing out a cloud of pungent smoke and wrinkling his eyes up again with another chuckle. "You've had so much to say, I haven't had a chance to get a word in edgewise."

"Guilty, my lord!" pleaded Bob, in mock humility.

"Ye remember I left Mr. Peeke and the

pair of ye at Merwell to go home to Harwich?" continued the skipper. "Well, that's how 'twas. I went to the inn there, the Ketch, to have a drop of something to warm me for the journey, and I got talking to the man who keeps the place. We got on all right, and after a time another man came up and joined us. He was the fellow you had the fight with, Bob Castle—the man who was standing on deck after I was lowered into the dinghy back yonder on the Vanderveide."

"Maxim Smirnov," said Bob.

"Was that the name of him? Well, no matter. As I was saying, he joined in, and after a bit I began to feel drowsy—and that's the last I remember. Next thing, I woke up on his motor-boat, and hours after that we arrived in these parts."

"I heard Smirnov reporting to Griff that 'knock-out' drops had been put in somebody's drink," interposed Bob. "He said that he had been asking too many questions. That was you, of course, for you were the prisoner, and it was you he was talking about. But he had found some papers—he said you were a coastguard. That's what made me think it was Jim's father they had in that cabin. And where is Jim's father, anyway? And are you a coastguard?"

"Easy—easy!" protested Joe Juniper smilingly. "One at a time. I am a coastguard, my boy. I'm an officer in the Preventive Service, and stationed at Harwich. I thought I was safe, but they must have recognised me somehow; perhaps they've got their spies all along this coast. But I was expecting trouble—or prepared for it, anyways, and I was able to pass the word along. I'd heard enough, by putting one thing alongside another, to have an idea from their talk what was happening hereabouts, and I managed to write a little note and stick it on the underside of one of the tables in the bar with a morsel of chewed-up bread."

"And it was found by—" began Bob eagerly.

"By my owner, Mr. Peeke," said Joe, nodding sagely, pausing to light up his pipe again. Then: "We'd arranged it in case of accidents, ye'll understand."

(Continued overleaf.)

Result of Football Competition No. 12.

Matches played, Saturday, Jan. 17th, 1925.

£250 WON.

In this contest two competitors correctly forecast the results of all the matches on the coupon. The Prize of £250 has therefore been divided between the following:

J. C. COLLINS, 1, "O" Block, The Avenue, Ebury Bridge, Pimlico, S.W. 1.

E. W. PAVITT, 7, Canada Terrace, Epping, Essex.

MUST BE WON!

£300

MUST BE WON!

REMARKABLE FOOTBALL OFFER.

Ten Results Only—No Goals Required—No Entrance Fee—Open to Scottish and Irish Readers.

Here you have a coupon containing **TEN** matches to be played on **SATURDAY, MARCH 14th**, and **£300** will be paid for the correct or most nearly correct forecast of the results of all these matches. All that competitors have to do is to strike out, in **INK**, the names of the teams they think will lose. If, in the opinion of the competitor, any match, or matches, will be drawn, the names of both teams should be left untouched.

Coupons, which must **NOT** be enclosed in envelopes containing efforts in other competitions, must be addressed to:

FOOTBALL COMPETITION No. 16.
Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

and must reach that address not later than the **FIRST POST** on **FRIDAY, MARCH 13th**.

RULES WHICH MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.

1. All forecasts must be made on coupons taken from this journal, or from any of the issues of the journals which contain the announcement of the competition.
2. Any alteration or mutilation of the coupon will disqualify the effort. When more than one effort is submitted coupons must not be pinned or in any other way fastened together.
3. If any match, or matches, on the coupon should be abandoned, or full time is not played for any reason, such match, or matches, will not be taken into consideration in the adjudication.
4. In the event of ties, the prize will be divided, but no competitor will be awarded more than one share of the prize.
5. No correspondence will be allowed, neither will interviews be granted.
6. The Editor reserves the right to disqualify any coupon for what, in his opinion, is good and sufficient reason, and it is a distinct condition of entry that the Editor's decision shall be accepted as final and legally binding in all matters concerning this competition.
7. All entries must be sent through the post, and any received after the **FIRST POST** on **FRIDAY, MARCH 13th**, will be disqualified. No responsibility can be accepted for any effort, or efforts, lost, mislaid, or delayed. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery. Unstamped or insufficiently stamped efforts will be refused.

This competition is run in conjunction with "Answers," "Family Journal," "Home Companion," "Home Stories," "Woman's World," "Boys' Realm," "Football and Sports Favourite," "Pictorial Magazine," "Triumph," "Sports Budget," "The Champion," and "All Sports Weekly."

Employees of the proprietors of these journals are not eligible to compete.

U.J.

Football Competition No. 16.

Matches played, **SATURDAY, MARCH 14th, 1925.**

Closing date, **FRIDAY, MARCH 13th, 1925.**

CARDIFF CITY	v. NOTTS FOREST
TOTTENHAM H.	v. HUDDERSFIELD T.
LEEDS UNITED	v. SHEFFIELD UNITED
MANCHESTER UTD.	v. PORTSMOUTH
SOUTHAMPTON	v. DERBY CO.
COVENTRY CITY	v. BARNLEY
BRENTFORD	v. SWANSEA TOWN
LUTON TOWN	v. MERTHYR TOWN
SWINDON TOWN	v. NEWPORT CO.
NEW BRIGHTON	v. ASHINGTON

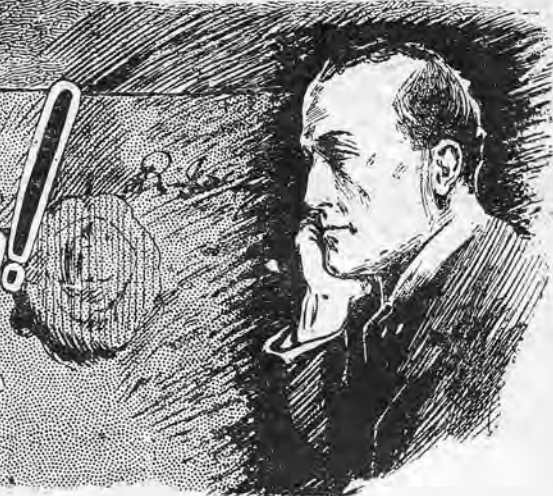
I enter **FOOTBALL CONTEST No. 16** in accordance with the Rules and Conditions as announced, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and legally binding.

Name.....

Address.....

16

Absolute Authority!



There is only one kind of reader to whom this yarn will appeal—the sort that likes mystery with a touch of the bizarre; plot and counterplot; breathless pursuits; colossal issues at stake as the incentive for slick detective work; and action—action all the way! You have learned to love the tales of Sexton Blake and Zenith the Albino. Here is one of the best we have come across yet. Plunge right into it now and enjoy yourself!

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Cup that Kills.



THE death of John Tattersal was, no doubt, a matter of considerable importance in Norwich—where the Tattersals were an influential and respected family—but, outside that city, even the suddenness of his death did not occasion more than passing notice.

His demise received the usual comment, however, at the church which he had attended, in the sermon on the Sunday following the funeral, and the tragic circumstances of his end were made a text for spiritual admonition.

John Tattersal had died at his residence in Unthank Road. It had been a Thursday afternoon; and, this being early closing day, he was able to leave his shop—he was a draper—and take tea with his wife and daughter.

He had been in his usual genial half-holiday humour.

Two minutes after drinking his first cup of tea, he had complained of feeling ill, and ten minutes later he had collapsed.

In two hours John Tattersal was dead.

The doctor, who knew Tattersal personally, and could find no adequate cause for his death, prevailed upon the widow to call in the police. Food of which the dead man had partaken was analysed and found to be wholesome. Post mortem examination revealed the fact that Tattersal had been poisoned by the administration of a vegetable alkaloid; but exactly what the poison was, or by what means it was administered, the medical experts were unable to indicate. The coroner's jury returned an open verdict.

Whereat the newspaper-reading public made remarks about the ignorance of experts or the incompetence of the police—and promptly forgot the matter.

Two months later, Wilfred Tattersal, a retired civil servant, who amused himself by breeding canaries, and who, like his brother, was a much respected citizen of Norwich, died in circumstances almost exactly the same.

He had come in tired from his evening walk, and had taken a cup of tea to refresh himself, dying immediately afterwards.

Similar steps were taken as in the case of his late brother, and similar discoveries made; but now public interest was acute. The London daily papers devoted considerable space to the "Tea Tragedies," and the county police—being unable to throw any light upon the matter—called in Inspector Courtts of the C.I.D.

That official, a stout and genial person, whose bowler hat and blue Melton overcoat seemed as much a part of himself as his rubicund visage and capable hands, allowed it to be known that he had "a clue" and hinted—for the benefit of reporters—at impending discoveries.

And then, much to his relief—for he had discovered little or nothing—the "Tea Tragedies" began to be forgotten.

In common with the remainder of the police, he devoutly hoped that nothing would cause the public to recollect them.

This did not mean that Scotland Yard was prepared to write off the mysteries as insoluble. Inspector Courtts would have courted severe trouble if he had suggested such a thing. It meant that he was completely baffled. He sensed the presence of a criminal with motives for murder, but could obtain no indication of the personality or the motives of the said criminal.

Nevertheless, in his dogged way, the inspector was following all sorts of obscure lines of investigation, only finding himself against a blank wall to turn back and begin again.

He discovered this: that the five sons of old Jacob Tattersal—John, Wilfred, Stuart, Herbert, and Claude—were equal sharers in the interest on the old man's investments, and that the investments in question amounted to the considerable sum of one hundred thousand pounds.

Further, that, in the event of the death of any, his share was equally divided among the remaining legatees, so that each had financial reasons to desire the death of the others; and, because of the demise of John and Wilfred, the remaining three—Stuart, Herbert, and Claude—were considerably better off in point of finance.

Needless to say, Inspector Coutts did not neglect the obvious implication.

He asked himself whether any of these three was in such need of money as to commit murder for the sake of it, and, in addition, where they were at the time of the tragedies.

Herbert Tattersal was a jeweller with a big shop at Cromer. Of his prosperity there could be no question, and the fact that he was devotedly attached to both John and Wilfred was well known. He was a frequent visitor to Norwich, and, as it happened, had been in the presence of the victim of each fatality on the day when it had occurred. Nevertheless, it was impossible to associate him with such a crime as fratricide, and Inspector Coutts had turned his attention to Stuart and Claude.

Stuart was the owner of a watermill at Corton-on-the-Wensum. His circumstances were not good. He was given to speculation, and his expectations regarding income from his father's legacy were mortgaged to the last penny. His mill had been destroyed by fire (in circumstances which the insurance company considered questionable), and rebuilt in a more modern fashion. It had been advertised for sale, and the advertisement was only withdrawn when the news of John Tattersal's death became known.

He was a bachelor and a recluse. He maintained that he had never left his mill, except to attend the funerals of John and Wilfred; but, as he lived alone, his alibi was not fully satisfactory.

The remaining brother, Claude, was, it appeared, a wanderer. His income was paid through a firm of bankers at Buenos Ayres, who, in turn, forwarded the money to Rosario. So far as was known, he had not been in England for several years.

All this Inspector Coutts discovered without much difficulty; but further he could not go. Several weeks of plodding research having yielded no information whatever, he sent out an S O S, and received, in his sitting-room at the Bull Hotel, three strangers, who came by car from London.

They were Sexton Blake, the famous crime specialist of Baker Street, his assistant Tinker, and their almost equally-celebrated companion Pedro, the bloodhound.

The public are very unobservant, and even Sexton Blake—much to his own satisfaction—would often pass unrecognized in a crowd. But, accompanied as he was by Tinker and Pedro, it was impossible for his identity to remain in question, and he had not been in the hotel ten minutes before a very inexperienced reporter sent up his card.

This young man was received, not by the private detective to whom he caused

his card to be sent, but by Inspector Coutts.

The good inspector informed him—with, it is to be feared, complete disregard for the truth—that Mr. Blake and his assistant were in Norwich on a private visit, that Mr. Blake's interest in the Tea Tragedies was only that of a newspaper-reader, and that, in any case, Mr. Blake's investigation of the matter was quite unnecessary, because he himself, Inspector Coutts, of the C.I.D., had practically cleared up the mystery himself.

Here the reporter, being very young indeed, asked if he might be informed of the solution thereof; whereat the inspector, with righteous indignation, warned the questioner not to pry into official secrets, and hustled him off the premises.

To Sexton Blake, however, the inspector was much less dignified, much less sure of himself.

He knew by experience that it was no good trying to impose upon the private detective, and, being a wise man, he did not try.

"To tell you the truth," he admitted, when, with one of Sexton Blake's excellent cigars between his teeth, he had thrown himself into a neighbouring armchair, "to tell you the truth, my dear Blake, there are points in this case which, perhaps, I have not yet completely comprehended.

"I will go so far as to say that there are many points, ah—one may as well be frank—most points! In fact"—and here he looked round to make sure that the door was shut—"I don't understand the confounded thing at all."

Having made this astonishing confession, the inspector did his best to hide himself behind a cloud of cigar smoke, and waited with really pathetic anxiety, a word from Sexton Blake.

The great criminologist only smiled.

He had come, in the early hours of that same morning, from a long struggle with a clever rogue, to his chambers at Baker Street, come there with a need for rest of mind and body. Even now his face was tired, his movements reluctant. But the S O S from Inspector Coutts had been a call which he could not ignore. He had a great liking for the genial inspector, and would not let him down.

"So," he said, "you're up against it, are you, Coutts? And you think that another, coming fresh to the case, may spot something which you have overlooked? I hope you are right. Tell me all about it; and Tinker, here, will make a few notes which may be useful later on."

Thus tactfully helped out, the inspector recovered something of his customary self-esteem.

"I think I may claim that, up to a point, my investigations have been very thorough, very thorough indeed," he said; "my only difficulty lies in making the next move. I have had three days and nights of torment, trying to find my way towards solution. I am like a man in a maze: every attempt to find a way out brings me back to where I started.

"Put it this way: those Tattersal fellows were murdered; and I have a pretty shrewd suspicion that they were murdered by their brother Claude, who is a bad lot, and looks capable of anything."

"Pardon me," Blake broke in, "this

is not evidence, my dear chap. You don't know that Claude murdered his brothers, or Claude would be under arrest. Let us examine your first statement. What makes you sure that they were murdered? Is it impossible that the same accident should befall two members of the same family? Is it inconceivable that two members of the same family should have the same reason for committing suicide?

"As to your second statement—You can't, you really can't, hang a dog for having a bad name. Come now; do you actually know anything at all about this affair?"

Inspector Coutts looked so like a sulky schoolboy, that Blake smiled again.

The inspector's face worked, and he chewed frantically at his cigar. If his questioner had been anyone else, he could have thought of a large number of imposing things to say; but, under the scrutiny of Blake's penetrating blue-grey eyes, he found it impossible to do anything but admit the truth.

"No," he said, at length.

Tinker laughed outright; but Blake kept a straight face.

"Thanks for your frankness," he said gravely. And then:

"We start with a clear sheet. We know nothing, we suspect nobody. As for the obvious implication that one of these five brothers has set himself to murder two or more of the others because he benefits financially thereby, we will mistrust that simply because it is obvious.

"But I have had sufficient experience of your methods, my dear Coutts, to know that you will have made painstaking inquiries about the persons implicated. Please let us know the result of those inquiries."

With this Coutts began again. Confining himself to facts, he placed before the great detective the circumstances with which the reader is already acquainted.

"It appears to me," Blake commented, "that each of the three remaining brothers might be suspected with equal justification. Herbert, the jeweller, because he had been in the presence of each victim on the day of his death; Stuart, because he is a bad lot; and Claude, because he resides in a country from which many poisons of vegetable alkaloid nature have come. It is a plausible theory that Claude supplied the poison with which Herbert, or Stuart, effected the removal of his brothers."

"Ha!" Inspector Coutts fastened on to this at once. "It's more than plausible, Blake! It's—"

The private detective held up a protesting hand.

"What a man you are, Coutts! You seize on to a very weak speculation as if it were an established fact. You must be content, for the time being, to suspend judgment entirely. Above all, we must mistrust the obvious. Our first step—if I may suggest it—is again to interview these two men, Herbert and Stuart Tattersal. From that point we may be able to take a first hesitating step towards a solution.

"And now, I think, if you would press that bell-button which is not a yard from your elbow—"

Blake stopped, looked inquiringly at the inspector.

Someone outside rapped with a knuckle upon the panels of the door. There was a commotion, and a high-pitched voice insisted:

"I tell you I must see him! I don't care if he's engaged with the King himself, I must see Inspector Coutts! It's a matter of life or death!"

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
One Brother and Two Witnesses.

THE man who entered when, in response to Blake's nod, Inspector Coutts unlocked the door was a tall, loose-limbed man with straw-coloured hair.

"Thank Heaven!" he said. "Thank Heaven I have found you, inspector! What to do I don't know!"

"Where did you leave your bicycle?" questioned Sexton Blake.

"Bicycle?" said the man vacantly. "I don't know. Dropped it in the road, I think. What does it matter?"

"Tinker," said the private detective, "go and see after Mr. Tattersal's machine, will you?"

Here the newcomer's curiosity triumphed over his panic fear.

"How do you know who I am, and that I was riding a bicycle?"

"Please sit down," replied Blake. "I know that you have been riding a bicycle because the rain which is falling has wetted the upper part of your shirt-cuffs, while the under-part is quite dry, and because the shins of your trousers are spattered with mud. I guess that you are Mr. Stuart Tattersal because, if you will forgive my reference to the fact, there is a trace of flour in the roots of your hair, and we have just been discussing your affairs."

"My affairs!"

Tattersal made a gesture of despair.

"They tell me," he said, "that you are the great Sexton Blake."

"My name is Blake," admitted the detective, "and I was about to ring for whisky-and-soda. Possibly you would join me?"

"Thanks!" said the man. "I need it badly! I have had a shock!"

"I know," said Blake, "I know."

"How do you know?"

"The legs of your trousers," Blake told him, "betray the fact that you habitually wear trouser-clips, and a trace of lubricant on the right one informs me that you have no chain-guard on your machine. Yet you have ridden here without clips on your trousers, a thing which, I imagine, you would not have done if your mind had been undisturbed."

"Well, you are quite safe now!" he continued. "What's the matter?"

"The matter is," groaned the man, "only this! I have seen Claude!"

"Claude, I take it, is your brother, who was supposed to be in South America?"

"Yes, my brother—my ne'er-do-well brother. I have seen him here in Norwich, and I have come to you for protection!"

"Tell us exactly what you mean, Mr. Tattersal."

The man did not impress Blake favourably, and the private detective was not inclined to help him out.

"Mean?" repeated Tattersal. "I should think my meaning was clear enough; but, if you want it in so many words, I think he murdered John and Wilfred, and I'm afraid that he might murder me. Is that plain speaking, or isn't it? You're the police, I'm a law-abiding citizen. I want protection. That's all there is to it!"

"And what makes you think that your brother might desire your death?"

Tattersal looked surprised.

"Do you know anything about this case, or are you pulling my leg?"



"Hallo!" shouted Blake. "Have you seen a man in evening-dress go across here?" "Ay," replied the ploughman. He pointed forward, and, as they watched, a slim figure staggered to the crest of the upland. "Zenith!" exclaimed Blake. (Page 10.)

"I know—something," murmured Blake. "Not quite so much as yourself, perhaps; but still—something."

"What do you mean by that? What do you mean by trying to make out that I know more than you do? What do I know that you don't?"

"You know," replied Blake, "where and how you met your brother. I don't. Perhaps you will tell me."

"That's what I'm here for. I met him in the market—bottom of St. Giles, to be exact—and I never saw a man look more surprised in my life! He's changed a lot. I suppose he thought I shouldn't know him, but I did!"

"Did you speak to your brother?"

"I tried to; but it's market day, and there was a regular crush just then. Result was he gave me the slip."

"And what makes you think your brother might desire your death?"

"You asked me that before?"

"Yes, but you haven't answered it. Please do so now."

"Not so much of it, Mr. Blake! A little less of the 'please do so now,' if you don't mind. I'm a law-abiding citizen, and I'll answer or not, as I choose."

"Look here," broke in Inspector Coutts, "you are asking police protection, and you are not in a position to refuse to answer questions. Mr. Blake wants to know this." And the inspector repeated Blake's question for the third time. "Will you answer or not?"

"All right, I'll answer. Yes, of course he's got reason to desire my death—the best of reasons! Not only money, but revenge. It was I who got him sent abroad."

"How was that?"

The man looked uncomfortable.

"Well, nobody's ever breathed a word of it; but Claude—he was always a bad lot—diddled the people who employed

him. In a bank, he was, and he faked the accounts. The old man made it right with them; but I saw that it was no good keeping Claude in England after that, and I—well, I advised the gov'nor in his best interests."

"Then, again, I was always opposed to Claude having a penny of the old man's money—and he knows that, too, I reckon. Oh, yes, he's got reason enough—and if I'm not careful there'll be another of the tea-tragedies. You've got to look after me. That's your duty. Well, let's be friends. What about another whisky, Mr. Blake?"

"Thanks, no," said Blake icily. "When a man confesses to me that he did his best to exile and disinherite his own brother I prefer not to drink with him!"

Tattersal rose, thrust his hands into his pockets, as if to keep himself from doing Blake an injury, and walked over to where the detective was sitting.

At the same time the bloodhound Pedro lazily stood up and fixed his brown eyes on Tattersal.

"If," said Blake, "you have any intention of using your hands, you had better wait until I send the dog out of the room. I don't like you; but I have no desire to see you mauled."

"Dogs," said Tattersal. "I can do what I like with 'em. And, as for you—"

He aimed a blow at Blake's head.

One second later he was lying full-length upon the floor; while both Blake and Tinker were struggling to keep Pedro from fastening upon his throat.

"Get out, you fool!" said Inspector Coutts. "Get out while you're safe!"

The man, who had been knocked flying before his blow arrived, sprang up and made a dive for the door, not staying to prove his boast that he could

do what he liked with dogs. The moment was not propitious.

Also, now that his gust of passion was over, he began to reflect that Sexton Blake was noticeably broad and deep-chested. He even realised that he had got off lightly. He had no desire to return.

"So much for Stuart Tattersal," commented Blake, as soon as Pedro had consented to return to the hearth-rug. "Now, if possible, we must arrange an interview with his brother Herbert; and, yes, if there is any truth in Stuart's story, with the remaining brother, Claude."

At this point the proprietor entered with the information that a man wanted to see Inspector Coutts.

The inspector's visitor proved to be a man of the labouring classes, an unprepossessing fellow, with a three-days' beard, bloodshot eyes, and a long cut upon his cheek.

"Be you Inspector Coutts, sir?" he asked of Blake.

"No, my man," Blake told him; "this gentleman is Inspector Coutts."

"Ah, well, it don't matter; and it don't matter who I am, I reckon. I'm only a working man, name of Newman, and I've come 'ere to tell you something as you'll be glad to know, I des-say."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Inspector Coutts. "Your name's Newman, is it? Where do you work?"

"Ah, I don't work. Not now. I did work for Mr. Tattersal—Mr. Tattersal, up at Corton Mill there—the man as just now came flying out of this room. But he give me the sack and he give me a cut face, and I'm going to get even with him!"

"Well, I suspect that you are going to tell us something that we know already; but get on with it!"

The man leered, with unspeakable cunning.

"These 'ere tea tragedies," he said. "Suppose I know who done them—what's it worth to you?"

"Nothing," said Coutts promptly. "You won't get anything here. If you've got anything to say, out with it. If you haven't, you can take yourself off!"

The man rubbed his hands.

"Oh, but I have—I have! I'm going to give old Tats away—that is, if we

can agree to terms. You and me, I mean, sir."

In supposing that Inspector Coutts was anxious to collect evidence connected with the tea tragedies, even in assuming that the inspector was willing to offer a small reward out of his own pocket for the same, Newman was probably right.

But Coutts had played the royal and ancient game of bluff far oftener than Newman, and won easily. His reply to the fellow's insistence was to throw open the door.

"Get out!" he said gruffly. "I know what you are going to tell me, I expect; and, anyway, it wouldn't be useful to me."

Newman laughed loudly.

"Ho, wouldn't it? Don't be in such a hurry. I'm going to tell you. I wanted to see if there was anything in it for me, that's all. You'd like to know the name of the man who murdered John and Wilfred Tattersal? Well, I'll tell you. Stuart done it. I've heard him own to it. Now then. Stuart done it himself, and I've heard him own that he done it."

Coutts looked at Sexton Blake inquiringly. It was plain to them both that Newman had been drinking; and the inspector's unspoken question was: "Is there any truth in this?"

"You appreciate, don't you," said the private detective, "that you are accusing Mr. Tattersal of murder?"

"Not being a fool, I do."

"And you are willing to give evidence under oath to the effect that you heard him confess to the crime?"

"Yes—willing and anxious."

"Tell us when and how he made this confession."

"Why, as to that, old Tats talks to hisself—always did. People what lives by theirselves get like that, talking as if they was two people. I come up the stairs to the grain-store, very quiet, and there he was talking away nineteen to the dozen. 'That's two of 'em done in!' he says, chuckling like. 'Only Herbert to go, now, and the money's mine! He—!'"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Sexton Blake. "You are sure of those words, 'Only Herbert to go now, and the money's mine'?"

"Absolutely, guv'nor."

"Those were the very words he used?"

"That's right. 'Only Herbert to go now, and the money's mine!' That's what he said, word for word."

Blake turned to Inspector Coutts.

"Strange, isn't it, inspector, that Mr. Tattersal didn't know that he had another brother, in addition to Herbert? I'm very much afraid this fellow is romancing."

To the man Newman he said:

"Even if your late employer had used those words, that does not prove him guilty of murder. He may have coveted Herbert's share of their common income. That is regrettable, but it is not a crime. Have you anything else to tell us?"

"Yes, I have; but if you're not going to believe me—"

"We shall believe you when you prove yourself worthy of belief. Go ahead!"

"Well, I said I could prove he done it; and I can."

Here the man turned to Inspector Coutts.

"I seen this gentleman before," he said. "You come up to the mill, didn't you? And Tattersal told you he had not been into Norwich for weeks?"

"Well, what about it?"

"Well, that was a lie, and I can prove

it."

"I can prove it. I got a witness. Me and him saw Tattersal riding his bicycle along Dereham Road at seven o'clock in the morning the same day as Wilfred Tattersal was done in."

"Can you produce your witness?"

"Yes, I can. I brought him with me."

Newman went to the door, opened it widely, and bawled down the passage: "Goats!"

A moment later his summons was answered by a wet and ragged lout, who, like Newman himself, bore about his person a liberal quantity of the produce of the flour mill, now turning into discoloured paste.

Newman seized this lad by his collar, banged his head against the doorpost—with the object, doubtless, of getting his brain into working order—and pushed him forward for the inspection of the detectives.

"That's my witness," he said triumphantly. "Here, Goats!"

He again clutched the lad by the collar.

"You're my witness, ain't you, Goats? Tell the gentlemen you're my witness."

Goats fumbled with his hat and looked at his feet.

"That's right," he said, "I'm his witness, I am. Name of Olley, likewise Goats. Goats Olley, as you might say, begging your pardon."

The lad, obviously, was only half-witted, and Blake extended to him a courtesy which he had withheld from the uncouth Newman.

"So, Olley," he said, "you are going to help us, are you? Were you with Newman when he saw Mr. Tattersal on the Dereham Road?"

Goats Olley turned to his associate for prompting.

"I wasn't exactly with you, Mr. Newman, was I?"

"Of course you was!" replied Newman promptly. "Of course you was! You and me saw old Tats riding his bicycle on the Dereham Road the day Wilfred Tattersal was done in."

"That's right," averred Goats. "I'm Mr. Newman's witness, and— When do I get my expenses?"

"Not so fast!" said the private detective, with a smile. "You only get your expenses if you tell the truth, and that isn't quite the truth, is it? That's only what Newman told you to say."

"Why, yes," admitted Goats. "I am his witness, I am!"

"No, you're not," Blake told him, "you're my witness now, and my witnesses have to tell the truth. Let us begin at the beginning. How much—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Newman. But Blake's order: "Be quiet, my man!" was so intimidating that he did not dare to continue.

"How much," repeated the detective, "did Newman promise you in the way of expenses?"

Goats turned a frightened and appealing glance at his associate, but, receiving no advice from that quarter, reluctantly admitted: "Arf a crown."

"Quite so. Well, here is your half-crown. Now you are bribed to tell the truth, are you not?"

"Yes, sir. That's right, sir. That's right, Mr. Newman, ain't it? I'm bribed to tell the truth."

"Very good! Now, Olley, tell us the truth. Did you see Mr. Tattersal on the Dereham Road?"

"Yes, sir; the day before yesterday, sir."

CHAMPION

The Tip-Top Story Weekly

Great News!

5 STUNNING
FREE GIFTS

POCKET CINEMA
FREE

with To-day's CHAMPION



"Ah! And when did you see him before that?"

"Why, I don't know as how I ever did see him before that, sir, being as how I'm bribed to tell the truth. Leastwise, I never saw him on the Dereham Road. I see him about the mill, like."

"That will do, Olley. You have given your evidence very well indeed. You may go now."

"Thankee, sir! Name of Olley—Goats Olley, at your service. Distance no object. Good-day, gentlemen all!"

"Wait a minute, Olley," put in Inspector Coutts, who saw a possibility of amusing developments. "Do you know who you are talking to? That gentleman is Mr. Sexton Blake, the great detective!"

Olley's jaw dropped. The half-crown fell from his nerveless hands and rolled across the carpet. "Sexton Blake!" he gasped, and, forgetting the price of his truthfulness, stumbled out of the room.

That he, Goats Olley, had spoken with Sexton Blake—had been, for a time, Sexton Blake's own hired witness—was a fact too great for his composure. He needed time to consider his new importance. Beside that, even the half-crown became insignificant.

And, even as he blundered into the corridor outside the room he was button-holed by the young reporter whom Coutts had evicted.

Within five minutes Goats Olley

**READ the STORY—
SEE the FILM!**

—Turn to page 20.

found himself drinking at the reporter's expense, and, in his daft way, supplying details of the interview.

As a result a well-known Norwich paper obtained a scoop—"Goats Olley Interviews Sexton Blake," and a certain experienced reporter obtained a rise in salary.

Blake's final words to the miller, Newman, were a warning.

"You get out," he said, "and in future don't try to use the law for personal revenge. One word more. If, as a result of this, you attempt to use your hands upon Olley it is probable that I shall know, in which case I will have you punished—severely punished. Now go!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Third Tragedy.



TWO days later, soon after the dawn of a beautiful autumn morning, Blake, Tinker, and Inspector Coutts descended from a hired car and turned towards Corton Mill.

Sunlight filtered through mist and touched the dying leaves of the wet branches above the road with a gold finer than their own. The mellow, infrequent song of unseen birds broke a silence intensified, rather than relieved, by the crooning of the river below the mill.

With only an occasional brief word, the detectives walked along the shallow and reedy margin of the stream to a spot where five other men awaited them.

These five were a policeman in uniform, a doctor—hastily summoned from Drayton Asylum—the man Newman, Goats Olley, and, lastly, a figure invested with the brief but terrible dignity of death—the man who had been Stuart Tattersal.

He lay, with limbs decently composed, on the sandy road, not far from the water, and the crushed reeds near him betrayed the manner of his death.

"Found this morning, gentlemen," the policeman informed them, "in two feet of water. Drowned, so Dr. Hall tells us."

"Ah!" Blake took hold of the situation instantly. "And who found him?"

"This man here—Olley, his name is."

"These gentlemen knows me," said Olley proudly. "Yes, Mr. Blake, sir, I found old Tats in the river. Just come down here to get a few roach, I did, and there he was, just like he was swimmin', dead as a doornail."

And the half-witted creature chuckled at his cleverness.

"And you?" challenged Blake, turning suddenly upon Newman. "How did you come into this?"

Newman became at once sulky, defensive.

"Why, naturally; I live hereabouts. I come along the road and see Dr. Hall pumping the arms of old Tats, being as how I was going down to the Labour Exchange after a job, and I stop to see what's happening. Why not?"

"How did you get that thick mud on your boots?"

"My boots ain't muddy."

"No, but they have been, and you have carefully wiped them over with grass, some of which still sticks to them."

"Well, you can't go down for a job with dirty boots, can you? I naturally cleaned myself up."

"That's very true, my man."

The detective appeared to be satisfied with the explanation.

"Well, lend me your knife," he added.

"Knife?" repeated Newman, and thrust his fingers into his trousers pocket. Then: "I haven't got no knife," he said.

"Think again. There are knife marks on your boots where you scraped them before wiping them with grass, when you cleaned yourself up."

"Oh, all right!"

The man brought a large clasp-knife from his pocket and handed it to the detective.

Blake opened the knife, held it to his nostrils, and handed it back.

"Really," he said, "you people who commit crimes are not cautious enough. You not only bear upon your person a large and obvious advertisement that you have trodden in muddy places and do not wish the fact to be known, but also you cut a branch from a willow tree and leave your knife-blade strong with the characteristic smell of willow, while a chip of white, fresh-cut wood is left clinging to the rough material of your clothes. I observe that Mr. Tattersal's watch is missing. The last time I saw him he wore a large gold chain across his waistcoat. Now the third button of his waistcoat is undone and the chain is not there. Can you help us to find it?"

"No, I can't."

"Better reconsider that, Newman, my man. Your position is very perilous indeed. I am advising you in your own interests when I urge you to make a clean breast of your part in the affair."

"I have told you everything. I ain't going to say another word. It's about time I got down to the Labour Exchange."

"Not so fast."

Inspector Coutts stepped to Newman's side, and, with expert rapidity, ran his hands over the man's clothing.

"I arrest you," he said, "on a charge of stealing Mr. Tattersal's watch, and warn you that anything you say may be taken down in writing and used as evidence against you."

Having felt the bulge of the large time-piece in Newman's pocket, the inspector was on reasonably safe ground. He was morally sure that Newman was not only a thief, but a murderer; and many have been hanged on evidence less convincing than he was able to bring forward in the light of Blake's discoveries. But Coutts was too experienced to make the mistake of arresting on the major charge. That would come later. He contented himself by securing a pretext to keep his man in custody.

Thus threatened, Newman, wisely or unwisely, decided to say nothing, and relapsed into a sulky silence.

Blake, eagerly observed by the rest of the party, began to make a methodical survey of the scene of the tragedy, hoping, probably with reason, that his extraordinary delicacy of perception, his highly developed faculty of observation, would yield further evidence to which his official confrere was blind.

"Please don't move!" was his preliminary warning.

He went to the margin of the river, and proceeded to reconstruct the scenes which had taken place at that spot since dawn. He read the spoor of the various actors in the tragedy as plainly as if the muddled verge were a printed page. Newman, Olley, the policeman, and the doctor had all imprinted their footmarks there. The dead Tattersal had left no footmark, only a blurred wet trail, where he had been dragged from the water.

"Tattersal," he said definitely, "did not enter the water here. We must search up-stream. Dr. Hall will perhaps be good enough to arrange for this poor fellow to be conveyed to his mill. Inspector Coutts will remove his prisoner to the station. Tinker will accompany me."

He uttered these instructions with rapid brevity, and, not worrying much whether they were obeyed or not—although, in point of fact, he was certain of obedience—Blake turned up-stream towards the mill.

Tinker, stealing a sidelong glance at his employer's face, perceived that it was set and purposeful.

"Hallo," he said to himself, "the guv'nor did not make all those arrangements for nothing. There's something in the wind."

Tinker was right, as Blake's next words made very clear.

"While I proceed with my investigations," he said, "you will leave me, and walk away as if you had business elsewhere. Make a wide detour, and return to the back of those bushes which—don't look—are on our right hand. There you will find some person who has been observing our movements for the last five minutes. Tackle him low, and give me a hail when you've done it."

Having given Tinker these instructions in a low voice, the detective stopped and turned.

"You'll be going, then," he said, more loudly, as if taking leave for an hour or so. "Good-bye, my lad, good-bye!"

"Good-bye, guv'nor!"

And Tinker walked rapidly away in the direction of the mill, while Blake went on with the business in hand.

It was no pretext this. Having observed the presence of a spy, and made arrangements to expose him, Sexton Blake did actually forget his presence. His was no mind to think on two subjects at one time. On the contrary, his greatness was due to his ability to concentrate.

On this occasion he took a considerable risk. The person behind the bushes might, for instance, have been a potential assassin, armed, and waiting to make sure of a fatal shot. Blake knew this perfectly well, but banked on his intuition that it was not so. In any event, he had risked his life before, and would do so again. What risk there was he took with both eyes open, and went on with his job.

Ten minutes passed.

Blake had found the tree from which Newman had cut a bough. He had traced the imprint of Newman's feet upon the soft surface of the road, to where the man had stopped, revolved, astonished, upon his heels, walked to the river margin, returned to the road, hesitated, then, purposefully, again approached the river with the object of cutting a branch.

"This man," he told himself, "was walking in the direction of Norwich. He stopped, receded, and stood gazing in the direction of the river. The cause, I think, is obvious. He saw the dead body of Tattersal floating downstream. His first thought was to give the alarm. Then he remembered the gold watch, an object which he must have coveted for a long time for it to occur to him then."

"I judge that there was no doubt that Tattersal was dead. If there had been, surely even Newman would have plunged in to his assistance. No, he was sure that Tattersal was dead, and he wanted the watch. A ghoulish idea, certainly; but Newman is not a man of fine sensibilities. He drew his knife, hacked a bough from a tree, brought the body within reach, robbed it of the watch and chain, and—yes, here is the spot—pushed it again into the stream. Then—"

There was a crash of breaking branches as some heavy object was hurled into the bushes where the spy had been hidden. At the same moment a man uttered that involuntary cry which often accompanies a blow on the solar plexus.

Blake turned with a smile.

Obviously, Tinker had not only downed his man, but had, at the same time, knocked the breath completely out of his body.

In the lush grass at the foot of the hedge, almost hidden by a tangle of brushwood, the detective found Tinker, face downwards, but chuckling with joy. "Beautiful tackle!" he boasted gleefully. "Perfect peach of a tackle! Wish you'd seen it, guv'nor."

"I heard it," Blake told him, "and it certainly sounded effectual. Where's our inquisitive friend?"

"The lower part of his legs is clutched to my bosom; the rest of him is down there among the brushwood."

"Stand clear, then, my lad, and let us inspect him."

Tinker released his hold, dodged a wild kick from his prisoner, and rose to his feet. Almost immediately the subject of his tackle struggled free, and, rather the worse for his dive into the thorny hedge, arose to face the detectives.

It was the reporter who had interviewed Inspector Coutts, the bright young man who had made a scoop of Goats Olley's conversation with Blake.

"My word," he said, "that was a fierce effort—eh, Mr. Blake? Have you ever had your face rubbed in the roots of a thorn-bush? It's rotten! Still, I

enjoyed it in a way. 'Copy,' you know. Pleased to meet you, Mr. Blake. I am the—"

And he named a well-known Norfolk paper.

"A reporter—eh?"

"Yes, a journalist. This is a moment, Mr. Blake, to which I have been looking forward. Could you"—he produced a notebook—"could you give me a few words on 'Murderers I Have Met'?"

Sexton Blake laughed heartily. The young man's simplicity was a welcome relief from the grim and sordid tragedy which was under investigation.

"You are a pushful young man," he commented, "and clever enough to know that I have no time for interviews. You have this morning witnessed a tragic discovery and a sensational arrest. Be contented with that. Get back to Norwich and write up your copy."

The reporter protruded his chin.

"Nope. I have come to the conclusion that where you are things happen, and I am going to hang on to record them."

Blake raised his eyebrows.

"Dear me, that's likely to be inconvenient, not only to myself and my assistant, but to you. The things that happen to me are not always agreeable, and a man who accompanies me is likely to be involved in the worst kind of trouble. Do you realise that?"

"Perfectly, Mr. Blake. And thanks very much for your invitation. My name is Buckingham—William Buckingham—and when you meet with trouble—er—I shall be there."

"I wasn't aware," said Blake, "that I had uttered an invitation. But I'd rather have you here, where I can see you, than behind a bush, where I can only suspect your existence. I make one condition. Your word of honour to publish nothing concerning my affairs of which I do not approve."

"I give you," the reporter assured him, "my word of honour. And now," he continued briskly, "shall we proceed with investigations?"

"Certainly!" Blake agreed. "Will you take the lead, or shall I?"

For the first time in his life the young man achieved something resembling a blush.

"You're pulling my leg!" he mumbled.

"Precisely. Now, I must ask you to keep quiet and keep out of the way while my assistant and myself get to work."

Blake turned to Tinker.

"I have got this far, my lad. I am almost sure that Newman had no hand in causing the death of Tattersal. I admit that the evidence is black against him; but I think he will be able, with our help, to establish his innocence. If my deductions are correct, the first time he saw Tattersal during many hours, perhaps days, was when he caught sight of the man's dead body floating downstream."

"For the spot where Tattersal entered the water, or where the dead body of Tattersal was thrown into the water, we must search the banks of the river towards the mill."

Followed by the sedulous reporter, the detectives walked slowly in the direction indicated.

The stream was bordered by soft mud and rushes, the current ran most strongly on the side near to them. As it was inconceivable that Tattersal could have reached, or been brought to, the water without leaving unmistakable traces of the fact, their task was easy.

After fifteen minutes' careful scrutiny they were able to assert that the tragedy had taken place at, or above, the water-mill.

At the mill itself, the stream was confined between brick walls, which were

spanned from side to side by the arches supporting the mill buildings.

At the side from which the detectives approached there was a space used as a cartway, and separated from the water by parapet walls. Here they came upon a most unmistakable clue to the spot where the tragedy had been enacted.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Tattersal Inheritance.



BLAKE had looked round at the high and ugly superstructure of the mill, at the shallow waters of the "Back River" rolling over its gravelled and weedy bed, and along the tortuous vista of water and trees towards the distant city.

Then suddenly he bent and raised the body of a man, unconscious or dead, who was lying, almost head downwards, among some stunted bushes which rooted in the arches beneath the mill.

Small as the bushes were, the man had been concealed so completely that only the toe of his boot had betrayed his presence.

The reporter was delighted. He was so far the slave of his profession that neither tragedy nor farce—the jig-saw pieces of which life is made up—appealed to him, unless they represented "copy" indeed.

"Ah!" he said, with gruesome triumph. "Another fatality!"

Blake placed the insensible man full length upon the ground, and bent to sound his heart.

"No," he pronounced, "this poor fellow is not dead, or anything like it. In ten minutes he will be able to speak."

Here Sexton Blake was mistaken, for it was nearly half an hour before their patient opened his eyes.

But for the water with which the detectives drenched his head and face, and the brandy which Blake forced between his teeth, the period of his insensibility might have been much longer.

His first word was profane. He opened his eyes, let drop this single syllable, then again closed his eyes for a moment as if to collect himself.

"Hallo!" he said, at length. "I've been unconscious or something. Where's Stuart?"

"Your brother," Blake told him, "has been very seriously hurt. Tell us how it happened, Mr. Tattersal?"

"How it happened. Good heavens, I hardly know! How did you get my name? Been through my pockets, I suppose?"

"No; nothing of the sort! Your skin betrays a sub-tropical life, you are wearing a Brazilian stone, and you ask for your brother; we naturally conclude that you are Claude Tattersal. Obviously we are right. Now tell us what occurred here in the early hours of the morning."

Blake indicated Inspector Coutts, who had now joined the party.

"This gentleman," he went on, "is a police officer. He will warn you that anything you say may be recorded and used against you. Now, if you feel strong enough, please carry on!"

Claude Tattersal staggered to his feet and leaned against the parapet wall.

"My brother," he said, passing his hand across his face, "is seriously hurt? Is that the whole truth, or—"

"I think," replied Blake, "you should now be told that this is only a half-

truth. Your brother is dead. His body has been found in the river."

"Dead? Yes, I remember now. He struck me. I returned his blow. He fell backwards over the parapet into the water. Then the pink-eyed man hit me with something. That pink-eyed man—where is he? Who was he?"

"You'd better tell us the whole story from the beginning," suggested Blake.

"Yes, obviously, I had better do that. I suppose I shall be arrested; but there is no reason why I should not tell you the whole thing. I am sorry about poor old Stuart. We never got on together; but—Heaven knows!—I had no intention of causing his death. His accursed temper was responsible. He shouldn't have hit me.

"If, sir," he said to Sexton Blake, "that is a flask you are holding in your hand—"

Blake handed him the flask, and he drank all that remained of the spirit.

"Thanks! That's better! Yes, I'm Claude Tattersal. I arrived from South America a week ago, in connection with certain private affairs. My brothers have never been brothers to me; and I didn't intend letting them know of my arrival in England; only—the one who is dead, who met his death in a struggle with me—caught sight of me in Norwich Market Place, and I couldn't resist having a word with him. So I knocked him up at six this morning."

"Rather early," commented Coutts, "for a call?"

"It was; but I was leaving England again to-day, and had a lot to do. My train left Norwich Thorpe at eight."

"Your private affairs were settled then?"

"Well, I don't know! I thought they were."

"And now?"

"You see, I had been indiscreet. I had talked too much about a certain matter, and, when I heard of my brothers' deaths, I wondered whether my indiscretion could have been the cause."

"Could it?"

"I don't know. I hope not. I'd better explain the whole thing."

Tattersal visibly braced himself for a sustained narrative.

"It's like this. We five brothers inherited a certain secret on which a great value is set. I don't know what it is; nobody does. The secret is contained in a small sealed box which each of us holds for one year in turn. Well, I'd talked about this to a man I know, a German whom I met out in Buenos Ayres.

"The old man—I think he was a bit wrong in the head, really—made provision in his will that each of us should hold it for one year; and, at the end of the year, pass it on to another. There was no stipulation to prevent two of his sons passing it backwards and forwards year by year, and I dare say that's what did happen. I never held it, anyhow; and until Stuart showed me the box here in front of the mill, I had never even seen it.

"He must have valued it more than I did, for he at once assumed that it was the box I was after.

"He brought it out from his pocket—a polished, wooden thing, about the size of a cigarette-case.

"Here is it," he said, before I'd had a chance to say a word. 'Here it is, but you aren't going to have it, you murdering ne'er-do-well! Get out of my sight!'

And he let fly at my face.

"Well, I didn't want to hit him. I assure you, gentlemen, that nothing was farther from my thoughts.

"But I didn't want to be hit, either; and I caught hold of his arms to stop him.

"At that the silly— Well, the poor



One of the windows was in ruins. Blake, with the car, disappeared into the interior of the house, smashed a standard lamp, and collided heavily with a grand piano. Then he stopped his engine and sprang out. (Page 22.)

chap's dead, I won't say anything against him. He thought I meant violence, and began to struggle.

"It was then, when I was struggling with the poor chap, that I caught sight of the other—the pink-eyed fellow.

"At least, I suppose there was another. I've taken a good deal of drink in my time; but I've never got so bad as to see things. They say you see pink frogs with green spots; perhaps one also sees men with white hair and pink eyes—men whose laughter is sad, men who appear wearing evening dress at a country mill at six o'clock in the morning. Ah, I see that you recognise my description. I did see him, then?

"Certainly someone hit me a clout over the head, and it couldn't have been my brother. What about the box? Have you found the box?"

Inspector Coutts answered:

"No."

"Then the pink-eyed fellow bagged it. I thought he did. There'll be a terrible row among the Tattersals—what remains of them. This was the old man's most prized possession, and they set great store by it."

Sexton Blake said a word to Tinker, and the lad disappeared. The reporter caught some reference to Pedro, and his interest deepened.

These references, first to the pink-eyed man and then to Blake's famous bloodhound, led him to expect further developments of a sensational kind. Nor was he disappointed.

In a remarkably short time Tinker was back at the mill with the bloodhound upon a leash; and, while Inspector Coutts was using the car to carry Tattersal a prisoner to Norwich, the detectives set Pedro to the trail of the pink-eyed man.

"Of course," said Tinker, "it's Zenith the Albino—could be nobody else."

Blake nodded.

"Yes; and the box contains something of great importance, or Zenith would not be interested. Now, again, we have chanced upon a clue which might lead to his arrest. That is, assuming that he does not know of our presence here."

"What if he does?"

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"In that case I have no hope; but, still we must follow this, or any trail which might lead to Zenith. It should be easy enough, even without Pedro's help, to follow an albino dressed in evening clothes and travelling cross-country at seven o'clock in the morning. The hound knows what we expect of him. Lead the way, my lad!"

There had been rain in the night, and the low-lying fields were soaked. Before they had travelled a hundred yards both the detectives and their new acquaintance, the reporter, were wet to the knees; but Pedro showed no hesitation, and they went ahead at a pace never slower than five miles an hour.

As they crossed field after field without the hound showing any hesitation, the reporter came to the conclusion that their quarry did not stand much chance of escape; but, in the opinion of the detectives the betting was heavily in his favour.

They had observed that the trail crossed several of the narrow streams which abound in this part of the country, and they knew that the fastidious Zenith would not have waded through this deep, icy water if he had believed himself to be safe from pursuit.

Since he knew that he was in danger he also knew that faculties more than human would be used in following him

—that, in short, he would be tracked by a bloodhound.

If he knew his danger, then, with the start he had obtained and the resources he was sure to have reserved, Zenith was practically safe. Nevertheless, even Zenith made mistakes.

In his calculations there was a factor of uncertainty, and the detectives pressed on, hoping that, if there was only one chance in a hundred of coming to grips with him this might be the one.

After two miles cross-country he appeared to have taken to the road, and dropped to a walking pace. A sorry figure he must have been in his thin evening garb, wet through and shivering with the cold.

He was still running, for his heels had left no trace, while the pointed toes of his effeminate boots were quite clear where the road was soft.

For once the theatrical albino showed a disposition to shun observation. As they approached the little village of St. Faith's, Pedro indicated a field-gate, and, on being lifted over that obstacle, trailed away on a detour which would avoid the farms and cottages of which the village was composed. Evidently, and with reason, Zenith had chosen to attract as little attention as possible.

This fact gave the detectives their first hope that the albino's plans were not quite adequate to his situation; for if he had had, say, a car waiting on the far side, they knew he would have chanced it and gone straight on. They began to hope that he had no such resource; that, whatever his destination might be, he had to reach it on foot.

With a word to Tinker, Blake increased their pace to a run; and the reporter, who was not in condition for athletic exercises, and had already trotted two miles over heavy ground, began to show signs of distress.

"Drop out," said Blake kindly, "if you've had enough."

He spoke with as excellent a control of his breathing as if he were sitting in an armchair. The reporter looked at him in amazement.

"Never!" gasped the young man. "Sticking it, if I drop dead!"

On the far side of the large field which they were now crossing the party came upon the first human being they had encountered since leaving Corton.

He was a ploughman, muffled up to the eyes because of the cold of the morning and stolidly cutting a furrow behind a tandem of heavy horses.

"Hallo!" shouted Blake. "Have you seen a man in evening-clothes go across here?"

"Ay!" replied the ploughman.

And, to amplify his information, he pointed away across the field they were approaching.

The second field rose gently to a slight eminence almost five hundred yards away, and, as they watched, a slim figure, cloaked and silk-hatted, staggered to the crest of this upland, and continued on out of sight.

"Zenith!" exclaimed Blake.

There could be little doubt that he was right, and, further, a rather astonishing fact, that the fugitive was suffering from exhaustion.

He appeared hardly able to run over the heavy ground; and when at length they reached the spot where they had last seen him, they found his hat lying there where it had fallen from his head, and saw him, hatless, staggering towards a hedge.

"The impossible has happened!" said Blake; and he went up-hill at a pace which left Tinker some way behind and the reporter nowhere.

To a large number of the readers of

these chronicles it must seem that Blake's triumph at Zenith's misfortune, and his anxiety to close with a beaten man, were alike unworthy of a sportsman.

The man who stands alone, whose hand is against all, must always receive sympathy in this land of fairplay. There is no doubt whatever that the crook who observes a certain code will always receive more sympathy than he deserves. So it was with Zenith the Albino.

Firstly, because of his defect, his abnormal colouring, which awakened pity—the pity one instinctively feels for a cripple; again, because of his childishness, which made his sins seem mere waywardness; again, because of his singular charm, his courage, his generosity.

Now that his back was against the wall he commanded the sympathy which might be accorded a royal stag run to a standstill, sweating and trembling, with drooping head and distended nostril, what time the dogs assemble for the killing.

Sexton Blake, it need hardly be said, was a sportsman to the tips of his fingers; but it was his duty to throw away no advantages. If he was in a position—as he appeared to be—to strike a blow at Zenith, which the crook was not in a position to return, then it was his duty to strike the blow, and strike it he would.

Very little distressed by his long run, the detective gained rapidly upon the fugitive. The hundred yards which had separated them decreased to fifty, then Blake was at his heels.

He spurred, putting every ounce into a great increase of pace, got his arms around the man's body, and bore him to the ground.

It was not Zenith!

Blake knew that while they were still falling.

He had been at grips with Zenith before, and was not likely to forget the steely muscles of the Albino's frame.

This man was hard enough, but made in a coarser mould. He fell, not as Zenith would have fallen—like a coiled spring which will react with the quickness of light—but heavily, and with no urgent desire to arise and show fight.

Instead, he sat up. And, revealing the features of a youthful farm-hand, laughed loud with what breath was left to him.

"Gave you a good run," he said.

"You did," replied Blake ruefully.

"Who are you? And where did you get these clothes from?"

"Ah! I work for Mr. 'Arris, way over yonder at the farm there. Your friend give me these clothes."

"My friend?"

"Ah, the gen'lem with pink eyes. 'E told me you was 'aving a game, in a manner of speaking, and offered me five pounds to change clothes with him and race you to this fence. Ah, it was awright. But you didn't 'arf bring me down!"

Here the yokel got to his feet, and turned anxiously towards the distant plough.

"I wonder 'ow my 'orses is getting on?"

This last remark was addressed to nobody. To his astonishment, the three men who had pursued him had now turned and were hurrying off in the direction from which they had come.

Thinking it possible that, since everyone but himself appeared to be insane, these strangers were bent upon mischief to his plough or his horses, he hurried after them, and was in time to see them setting Pedro to the fresh scent of the ploughman—which scent, since Zenith wore his clothes, must now belong to Zenith.

With the mortifying reflection that they had passed within fifty yards of the albino, and not known him, the detectives wasted no time.

Zenith was a capable actor. When he assumed the clothes of a ploughman, he also took on the manners and bearing of a ploughman. There is no doubt that if he had found it necessary to speak further, he could also have counterfeited the uncultured voice and country accent of the man he pretended to be. There was no humiliation in being deceived by such an actor as he.

There was still a hope, and a strong hope, of running him down. His start was not more than five minutes, and the bloodhound followed his new scent with perfect ease.

Zenith's trail lay still further across the fields, but maintained a constant direction. He seemed to have taken no trouble to break the scent, although he must have known exactly what steps would be taken to trace him.

This filled the reporter with glee. He had no doubt that he was about to witness a sensational arrest. Its effect upon the detectives, however, was exactly opposite. If Zenith did not hide his tracks, they argued, it was because he had a perfect and complete plan for drawing a red-herring across them when the time came.

And so it was.

Quite suddenly Pedro stopped, uncertain, and began to cast about for the lost trail. The scent which the bloodhound followed had vanished as if Zenith had suddenly sprouted wings and flown into the air.

The true explanation was far simpler.

His borrowed boots—the odour of which the keen sense of the hound was able to discern wherever Zenith had trodden—the albino had dropped among the dead rushes of a deep ditch. Immediately afterwards he had climbed to the top of a post and rail fence, run along that with the skill of a tight-rope walker for some distance, and then jumped clear.

It was a full hour before Blake and Tinker were able to fathom the manœuvre and find the imprint of his stockinged feet ten feet from the fence.

By that time he was far away.

The secret of the mysterious heirloom of the Tattersals was in the possession of Zenith. And Zenith—where?

Well it was for Sexton Blake that he did not know how far the peace of the world hung upon the contents of that box.

That knowledge was to come, and with it the hour when—invested with powers such as one individual has seldom attained in history—he was to offer his life, and the lives of many others, in the hope of preserving The Great Secret.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Lot 301.



IN view of the evidence which Inspector Coutts was compelled to give—that Stuart Tattersal had feared an attack from his brother, and in view of accused man's own confession that he had been the cause of his brother's death—it was impossible that the coroner's jury should bring in a verdict other than one of wilful murder against Claude Tattersal.

(Continued on page 19.)

The U.J. DETECTIVE SUPPLEMENT

VOLUME 3.



No. 9 Presented with
the UNION JACK for
the week ending
February 28th 1925.



Tales of the 'Special' Branch

Told by Detective E. T. Woodhall

(Formerly of the Special Branch, Scotland Yard, and Member
of the Secret Service of H.M. Forces on Active Service.)

No. 1.—At the Right Hand of Kings.

Like shadows, the special detectives entrusted with the task of watching over the safety of Royalty and the great ones of the earth, lurk ever at hand in case of an emergency. Their service must be unobtrusive, yet effective; for, at any moment, the hand of the assassin or the lunatic may be raised against a Royal personage or a distinguished visitor. In this instalment Detective Woodhall tells some tales of the guardianship of the great.

FOREWORD.

When Detective Woodhall resigned from the police service he was a member of the senior detective patrol engaged in tracking down criminals and in preventing crime. Few men have crowded so much eventful service into their police career. Early transferred into the Special Branch, he has assisted to guard kings, princes, and famous visitors to our shores; while in his work with the Secret Service in the counter-espionage set up during the war, he encountered

many thrilling experiences. These "Tales of the Special Branch" reveal much that is fascinating of the vigilance with which society is guarded against the depredations of evil-doers, of the unremitting care exercised to guard the great against attack or annoyance, and lifts the curtain from the closely-kept secrets of the methods used by our Secret Service during the war to check the cunning espionage tactics of our enemies.

IN the year 1910 I struck a red-letter day in my career as a constable of the V Division of the Metropolitan Police. From patrolling a beat in the district stretching from Putney to Richmond, I was promoted to become a member of the Special Branch of Scotland Yard.

I had worked hard for the step, and naturally when it came I was elated. It was a realisation of a long-cherished ambition.

Henceforth I was to leave behind the rather humdrum work of a uniformed constable to undertake work of a very special and secretive character. Incidentally it is a good rule that no detective can graduate into specialised departments of crime-investigation until he has served his probation in the ranks as a constable.

The Special Branch is now absorbed in the four main divisions of the Metropolitan Police. It originated mainly to watch the activities of unwelcome visitors to our shores—the anarchists and other political refugees who might be likely to cause trouble when foreign potentates and distinguished men were in London.

These wandering and often desperate characters were men well known to the

foreign police, and usually they received but little attention when in our own country. But on those occasions when distinguished visitors came over, Scotland Yard had charge of their safety; a particularly onerous task when revenge or political insanity animated the refugee with hatred against some monarch or prominent man.

Thus the Special Branch had duties entirely distinct from detective work of the ordinary kind, and this "shadowing" naturally had to be performed with the utmost discretion and unobtrusiveness. It had to be effective, but invisible.

In this, as in other affairs, to be forewarned is to be forearmed, and a great proportion of the work of detectives attached to this branch is of a routine nature. Besides acting actually as bodyguards in case of attempts at assaults and the like, it falls upon them to know if assault or any kind of outrage is contemplated.

This most important work entails the constant supervision of all those known to be ill-disposed towards royalty or statesmen; it means a constant watch at ports for the entry of anarchists, agitators, or would-be assassins, and a very careful watch on the political opinions

of certain sections of foreign and native individuals known to be interested in politics, and likely to entertain sedition.

That this work, in spite of its lack of limelight, is exceedingly interesting, needs perhaps no accentuation, and it is work that is coveted by detectives in all parts of the country.

I was only twenty-four years old when I received promotion. I was small for a policeman, dapper in appearance, and as unlike the conventional idea of a detective as it is, perhaps, possible to be. This, naturally, was a point in my favour, and enabled me to carry out my duties in numberless cases without attracting the slightest attention, a fact which all men concerned in this kind of work will readily appreciate.

I soon came into contact with men whose names are household words. They included his Majesty King Edward, King George (then Prince of Wales), the King of Greece, the Kaiser, and many other royalties; also Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Winston Churchill, and a host of other well-known figures.

I also came into close contact with very different kinds of individuals—anarchists, sedition-mongers, revolutionaries, and assassins.

King Edward, from a detective's

point of view, was an ideal subject for what is known as "protective surveillance." He used to drive about in his brougham considerably, and it was easier to keep in touch with him and, at the same time, be unobtrusive than if he had travelled by car. My most exciting incident when at his right-hand was owing to the actions of a woman with a grievance.

It is not generally known that, in addition to our duty in guarding royalty against attack, we have to keep away over-zealous loyalists and also petitioners. Royalty are not snobs; they do not mind receiving petitions of their subjects or gifts, but it stands to reason that were this allowed in public, they would never be able to move about in peace. Tricks are often tried to get the personal attention of the royal family towards private grievances, and I recall one instance when a woman did almost succeed in a design of this kind.

King Edward was opening a flower show, and was being accorded a right royal welcome by the assembled crowd. Handkerchiefs were being waved, and many people had provided themselves

His Majesty was given a tremendous welcome; the house cheered and cheered again, such was his popularity. But little did any of the general audience realise that, though smiling, the King was suffering intensely. I had to attend to the royal box, and he turned and thanked me kindly, as was his wont. I saw a look in his eyes that was unmistakable. King Edward was then a dying man.

That was his final appearance in public. At 12.55 that night he drove to Buckingham Palace for the last time, and I can claim, through having left him at the palace gates, to be practically the last of his subjects, save a few of his most intimate friends, to have seen him alive.

Surveillance over the present King is not quite so easy, but, none the less, he is constantly within close call of assistance.

My most vivid recollection of work with him was when I used to be on duty in Rotten Row, when he was riding.

Though we do not make ourselves known to those whom we are attending,

It was at his departure, and he was bidding farewell to the assembled crowd of personages who had come to see him off, when a man, pushing through the press, made a rush towards him. He did not get far, however, for an officer was on him like a shot, and quickly hustled him back into the throng, and out of the precincts of the station.

There was something behind this incident. The man was not armed, and was not recognised as one of the malcontents from Germany which this country then harboured; he was, therefore, allowed to go. It is possible he merely meant to address the "All Highest"; on the other hand, he may have meant to get his fingers round his throat.

In the latter eventuality our London railway stations would not, at a later date, have been the scenes of so much activity for which the German Emperor was responsible.

The work of "shadowing" royalty is not quite so easy as it may at first appear. In the first place, it is essential not to be obtrusive, but at the same time one must be within call, or, as the case may be, within arm's length if the necessity arises.

When, say, a "subject" is strolling along the street, it is fairly easy to keep unostentatiously close, and the rule is never to allow anyone to approach or speak unless obviously someone having the right to do so. For this reason it is essential to be able to retain in the memory the faces of a great number of people. For it would not do to step straight in front of one of any monarch's closest friends if he stopped to speak when out for a walk.

A curious incident occurred to me when I was attending the late King of Greece in London.

King George of Greece was walking down Bond Street, quite on his own and apparently glad to be free from all care for a time. I was very close at hand, so close, in fact, that, though his Majesty did not expect it, I was able to step suddenly right in between him and a strange lady who stopped and addressed him.

I did not know her by sight, and apparently the King did not either, for, after he had recovered from his surprise at her action and my sudden appearance as protector from nowhere, he asked her what she wanted.

Standing very close to her so that she could not have raised her hand without my being able to seize her, I heard every word. She replied that she was Lady —, mentioning a well-known Society woman, and that though she had not the honour of being presented to his Majesty, she desired to pay her respects and secure his autograph.

Greatly relieved, and laughing at the incident, the King wrote in her book—how I watched that book!—and went on his way, evidently rather pleased. I heard afterwards that he was full of admiration at the protection being afforded him by the British police.

There is no doubt that had the woman been an assassin, I should have been able to save the King's life. That there was real fear of such an affair as an attempt upon him is proved by the fact that, later on, he was struck down and killed in the streets of Salonika.



The ex-Kaiser (indicated by arrow) on his departure from the London terminus after the funeral of King Edward. A few seconds after this picture was taken a man was prevented by a "Special Branch" officer from making a rush at him, as Detective Woodhall describes in this article.

[Topical.]

with bunches of flowers. Some of the latter were thrown in the direction of the royal carriage, at times with more force than discretion, and had it not been for my vigilance, one of them would have struck his Majesty a sharp blow in the face.

I succeeded in "fielding" the flowers, and that I was justified in stopping the "present" as well as protecting the King was proved by the fact that attached to it was a letter.

This letter was handed to an official, and was found to deal with some very trivial matter then before the courts. The woman evidently thought that she was being wronged, and had asked his Majesty's personal intervention—an impossibility, however willing to help he might have been.

I have a vivid recollection of the last days of King Edward.

Having reported for duty to the authorities at Buckingham Palace, I was told that the King was ill, but nevertheless intended to attend the royal command performance at Covent Garden, where Mme. Tetrazzini was to sing.

unless it is policy to do so, an observant man like his Majesty soon gets to know our faces, and seeing us regularly hovering about discreetly in the offing, realises what work we are on. There is no politeness like that of our Royal Family, and I never knew King George, after he had come to know me by sight, fail to give a nod, a smile, and a "good-morning" as he rode past in the Row.

Of the Prince of Wales I will speak in another chapter, as it was when I was in the Secret Service in France that it became my very responsible duty to exercise "protective surveillance" over him.

Days during which foreign potentates visit our shores are busy ones for the Special Branch. It is then that it may enter the head of some fanatic to attempt a sensational "coup," and naturally Scotland Yard is anxious for its reputation then above all times.

It may not be generally known that when the Kaiser was in London for the funeral of King Edward, something very strange occurred.

Next Week—

**"BEHIND THE SCENES WITH
THE REVOLUTIONARIES."**

My "Spell" in Brixton Prison

By a Debtor.

This account of a debtor's life in the great prison at Brixton has been specially written for the "Supplement" by a Union Jack reader who has tasted the "joys" of incarceration in gaol for the non-payment of a debt.

READING the article entitled "The Old Marshalsea," in the last volume of the "Detective Supplement" (page 365), it occurred to me that readers of the UNION JACK would be interested in the actual experiences of one of their number recently sent to prison for the non-payment of a debt. I will tell my story in the fewest possible words, whilst it is still fresh in my mind.

Being in arrears of payment of a weekly sum which the magistrate at a certain police-court had said I was to pay, I was duly "taken up," and sentenced to two months' imprisonment.

I was at once taken to the cells, there to await the arrival, at four o'clock in the afternoon, of the Black Maria, which was to carry me to Brixton Prison.

The journey was a short one only, and it was not long before I found myself in the Reception Ward of the prison. There, after answering to my name and sentence as detailed in the Warrant for Committal, I was given my first meal as a debtor-prisoner—a pint of cocoa and an eight-ounce brown loaf.

That bit of business completed, I was subjected to a sort of personal stock-taking. A detailed description of my appearance, distinguishing marks, height, and so on, being entered in the prison book, together with such other particulars as name and address of next of kin.

I was then informed that if I did not wish to wear my own clothes whilst serving my "time," I could don the prison garb of blue serge—which is not marked with the broad arrow—and forage pattern cap.

No choice in the matter is given to the debtor-prisoner whose clothes do not strike the officials as being up to the required standard of respectability and cleanliness. The prisoner who elects to wear his own clothes is at once given to understand that he must have a clean change each week during his stay. There is no option about having a bath on arrival.

I had my plunge, and then was told to wait in another room to be examined by the doctor. Whilst awaiting his arrival, I was handed clean bed sheets, which were to serve me for a month, and pillow-slips, inside which were a brush and comb, a tiny tea-cloth, towel, Bible, hymn-book, Prayer-book, devotional book (according to one's religion) and a library card.

Then came my religion card—white for Church of England, red for a Roman Catholic, grey for a Jew. On the front of the card is one's cell number, register number, and space for doctor's remarks. On the back, where it is not exposed to general view, is entered nature of offence, name, and date of release. This card hangs on a board outside the cell, to the left of the door as one looks in.

Presently the doctor appeared on the scene, and I was overhauled to see if my bodily condition was such as to admit of

my being allowed to mix with the other prisoners. Those with whom the doctor is not satisfied are admitted to the prison hospital.

The inspection over, I was taken to my own particular "hall." There are seven of these, indicated by the letters "A" to "F," and the hospital hall. In each hall are four landings, or wards, numbered one to four.

Arrived there, I received my debtor's badge, coloured yellow, with particulars of hall, ward, and cell marked thereon. The badge is worn on the outside of the coat, on the left side, just above the pocket if prison clothes are worn. There is one pocket only, by the way, in the official garb.

The next move was to my cell. I was told to fetch myself some water, for washing in the morning, in an enamel water-jug holding about six pints. This was to serve as drinking water also, and I was informed I could get the jug refilled twice a day.

Having fetched the water, I was locked in the cell. The first thing that caught my eye was the small observation hole, with a swinging cap and glass pane, in the door, constructed so that whilst it was impossible for me to see out of it, anyone looking through it from the outside could easily see over every part of the cell. I was soon through with my look-around, and decided to make up my bed and get into it.

The night passed more or less comfortably, and at six-thirty a.m. the getting-up bell rang. Half an hour later a warder came to unlock the door, telling me to sweep out my cell and tidy up generally, and to make my bed in a certain way which he showed to me, the bed to remain so, untouched for the remainder of the day.

THAT done, any prisoner may make application, if he wishes to, to see the prison governor, the chaplain, or the doctor.

At seven-thirty came breakfast, the landing warder handing it into the cell. It consisted of a pint of tea, half-pound of bread, and a quarter-ounce of margarine. Breakfast over, came chapel for half an hour, the same programme being followed every morning.

After chapel I was taken before the prison governor, who asked, among other things, what money, if any, I had brought in with me, and what sentence I was serving.

A welcome break in the routine followed—half an hour's exercise, taken in company with other prisoners. For half an hour we walked in pairs round a paved circle, on a path about two feet wide, the same being repeated in the afternoon. Debtors are allowed to talk during that walk round, but at no other time.

From the paved circle we trooped back to cells, to work on the allotted task for the day—making mailbags, the pay for the day's work, if it is performed to the satisfaction of the taskmaster, being five-

pence. Cell doors are not shut during work.

Work continues on the same lines throughout the afternoon, after a two-hour break for dinner. If the work is not done properly, all privileges (including meals) may be docked as punishment. The taskmaster reports the slacker to the prison governor, and at ten o'clock next morning the work-shy is hauled up for sentence.

The governor is empowered to pass sentence of from one to three days' "bread and water." If the governor considers the maximum of three days on that diet to be insufficient punishment, he states the case to the visiting committee, whose powers in this direction are greater.

The governor's sentence includes solitary confinement, in a cell from which practically everything has been taken. The appropriate diet consists of a half-pound of bread and a pint of water for each meal.

GOOD conduct debtors are allowed to write and to receive one letter a week, and to receive a visitor for twenty minutes once in seven days, the interview taking place in a small room partitioned off with very fine, doubled wire netting. Two books a week are allowed from the prisoners' library. There are two religious services each Sunday, at eleven o'clock and at three-thirty.

Now for a fuller description of a Brixton debtor's cell. In size it is about six feet by eight feet ten. The windows have five bars outside, and some have an opening of twelve panes, each pane measuring six inches by four. Some have three sliding panes—so there is not much chance of escape that way.

Cell doors are three inches thick, faced with plated iron one-sixteenth of an inch thick, with a mortice lock which can be manipulated from the outside only.

The cell contains a spring bed fixed to the wall, a corner table fixture, a slate, small box for letters and another for cleaning utensils, brush for sweeping up, sanitary items, including enamel water-jug and wash-basin, and towel, enamel plate, wooden stool, spoon, tin knife, tea-cloth, one pair of sheets, two blankets, pillow-case, quilt, two library books, and a needle and thimble and scissors, which latter items are given up on the day of discharge.

The day before the debtor-prisoner is released, he is taken to the reception-room which he entered on admission, with all movables from his cell, as these have to be checked. He then goes before the prison governor, the chaplain, and the doctor.

That business through, he is put into a cell and given his breakfast before being taken to the office to receive and sign for any money he brought in with him and also whatever cash he has subsequently earned at prison work.

He is then escorted to the gate—and the prison has finished with him. Once again the debtor is a free man.

GRAB and RUN!

By Ex-Detective Harrison.

There have been many daylight raids this winter, and comparatively few burglaries have occurred at night. At first sight this seems puzzling, but in this article the seeming mystery is explained. Daylight robberies are not the result of bravado, but are carried out from the pressure of necessity.

THIS is now the period of daylight jewel thefts. Why? People jump to the conclusion that thieves choose the daytime out of sheer bravado. But expert crooks are not so foolish as to mix such sentiments with their business. There is a method in their seeming madness. They face the great risk of making their raids by daylight for the sufficient reason that it offers the only certainty of getting the valuable loot they seek.

It is safer to visit the jewellers at night; but now the probabilities are of making an entry and finding that all the diamonds and jewellery have mysteriously vanished.

The high-class silversmith and diamond merchant still makes the brave outward show of protecting his windows when his premises are closed for the day. The most familiar form is the imposing-looking sheets of steel, which seem to suggest to the imagination that there are precious treasures behind them. But the cunning criminal knows

very well that if he went to the trouble of a night attack, and got behind those steel sheets, he would get no valuable loot for his pains. Jewellers no longer keep diamonds and pearls of great value in their windows at night.

Sometimes the stock is taken out and removed away from the premises to a place of security. But invention has come to the protection of the diamond merchant.

One novelty provided by an alert mechanical brain is a window within a window. The show-stand is actually a slide, and moves into a solid fireproof and secretly-shuttered case, at the touch of a spring, when the closing-hour arrives, leaving the actual window empty.

THE wonderful displays of costly diamonds and pearls which Bond Street and Burlington Arcade jewellers make by day, and which are among the shop-window wonders of the world, are placed

in secret strong-rooms by night. Behind the well-shuttered and well-barred windows there is just—vacancy! Hence, when thieves recently made a substantial haul of beautiful gems they did so "during business hours," and actually at a time when the most aristocratic street in Europe was crowded with its fashionable shoppers.

This was also undoubtedly the reason which prompted the raiders in the recent Birmingham robbery to dare the police and the throngs in busy New Street at its liveliest hour. They were well aware that it offered the only chance of obtaining a haul of valuables.

It is only in detective story-books that the modern burglar continues to prefer a night attempt in quest of diamonds and other gems. In real life he is a diligent student of the ways of his prospective victim. Recent experiences have made it clear to the police that the raiders have paid preliminary visits of inspection to take a careful note of the arrangement of the windows and to select the stock of most value. The raid is made almost immediately afterwards, and the thieves know exactly where to break through and what to snatch.

This interesting theory in explanation of the daylight raids is confirmed by the official records that, notwithstanding the prevailing epidemic of robberies, there have been fewer night burglaries on jewellers' premises than for some years past, and most of these have been attempted by raw hands at the game.

HAVING so successfully outwitted the midnight visitor, the jewellers are now going to make his daylight visits very speculative ventures apart from the extra risks of capture. When the thief has made his bold dash, broken the glass, and clutched the coveted necklace, he will find to his chagrin that he has obtained merely an imitation. Wonderful—but yet false!

This is the immediate outcome of the crop of daylight raids. The jewellers may now have fine "dummies"—imitations which, they say, look as good as the real articles in the window. One West End firm has been making an experimental show of substitutes for some weeks past, and the manager has been amused by the daily comments of admiration he has overheard.

This firm has always been famous for a brilliant and costly display. To-day their window contains a show which looks as though it might be worth thousands of pounds, whereas the actual value is little more than fifty pounds. But the window display is not for sale. The firm refuses to deal in imitation jewellery. It is for the special benefit of any covetous and prying cracksmen. The jewels are just models of the real and lovely gems which are in the shop, under close observation by day, and safely housed by night.

Hatton Garden, the great centre of the diamond industry, which used to figure with unwelcome prominence in the records of raids, has almost lost its attraction for burglars, and the jeweller shops have been going out of favour as the scene for night attacks. Now it seems certain that they will soon lose their fascination for the daylight robber, for the thief will find he has only paste and penalties for his pains.



The smashed window of a jeweller's shop is no uncommon sight in these days. Why, you will learn in this article.

[Photo: Illustrations Bureau.]

Coming Shortly—

"TALES OF A COUNTRY
POLICEMAN."

Great Escapes—No 17.

The many daring escapes of Jack Sheppard

(Part One)

By Norman K. Harrison.

The sensational story of the greatest of all British escapers—Jack Sheppard, who broke out of prison time after time, but was foolish enough to get caught just as often.

TWO hundred years ago a young man of twenty-two carried out one of the most daring and dramatic escapes that this or any other country has ever witnessed, and with the simplest of improvised tools set at defiance the bolts and bars of Newgate Prison.

For twelve months the name of Jack Sheppard was one to conjure with in London, and in that short space of time he set the town by the ears, robbing whom and where he would, contemptuously defiant of the forces of law and order.

He lived in the time of the all-powerful Jonathan Wild, but he would not become one of his gang, preferring to work on his own account, with the sole aid of his faithful ally, Blueskin, and the story of his escapes proves once again that truth is stranger than fiction.

John Sheppard—to give him the dignity of his baptismal name—was the son of a carpenter, and was born at Stepney in December, 1702.

When a year old his father died, and Jack was placed in the workhouse at Bishopsgate to be brought up at the expense of the parish.

The early years of his life were spent in learning to be a carpenter, for he had been indentured to one Owen Wood, in Wych Street, near Drury Lane, and for six years he stuck to his trade, and proved to be a good workman, holding a high character.

It is quite possible that his work as a carpenter stood him in good stead during the time when he was "agin the law," for part of his duties would be to fix locks to doors and windows, and to see that the shutters then widely used were in good repair.

It was in the middle of the year 1723 that he commenced the career of crime that was eventually to land him at Tyburn Tree.

He had made the acquaintance of two women, Edgeworth Bess and Poll Maggot, and these persuaded him that an easier living was to

be made by crime than by carpentering. Perhaps his elder brother, Thomas, had something to do with Jack's decision, for he had returned from the sea and turned thief, and the sight of his easy money must have influenced the young carpenter.

But, though he successfully committed several robberies, he was not long at liberty, and in April, 1724, he was arrested and confined in the Roundhouse of St. Giles' parish while evidence of his crimes was being collected.

Jack's first imprisonment only momentarily depressed him, and he was soon planning escape.

The Roundhouse was very similar in appearance to the Martello Towers which are to be found at intervals on the English coast. It was two storeys high, and in the upper storey Jack was imprisoned.

Strong enough to all appearances, it had housed thousands of prisoners, and was regarded as quite a safe place to lodge a captive in.

The door was at some height from the ground, and was approached by a flight of wooden steps, and the windows were small and covered with close iron gratings. Altogether it was a formidable prison to be broken by an inexperienced young apprentice.

After being thrown into one of the compartments on the top floor, Jack rested for a time, his spirits being depressed at the first taste of confinement. But his youthful and volatile energies rapidly regained their accustomed liveliness, and he began to plan how he could escape.

Realising that the window, guarded as it was with iron bars, promised little opportunity for release, he turned his attentions to the roof.

Rummaging among the straw and debris on the floor, he found a portion of an old razor and some fragments of chain. Such finds were as good as keys to the clever young carpenter, and his escape was assured.

Clambering up to the roof, he quickly made an opening large enough for him to squirm his lithe body through.

Once in the outer air he was faced with the difficulty of reaching the ground; but, dropping back into the room, he rapidly tore the sheet and blanket from the bed into strips, and with the rope thus improvised lowered himself to the burial ground surrounding St. Giles' Church.

The astonishment at his escape the following morning was immense, and the hue-and-cry resulted in Jack being captured three weeks later, and committed, with



The carpenter's apprentice, the man who became famous for setting at defiance the bolts and bars of Newgate Prison. This picture of Jack Sheppard is from an old print of the period.

Edgeworth Bess, to the New Prison at Clerkenwell.

The New Prison proved to be a different proposition from the St. Giles' Roundhouse, and Jack Sheppard and Edgeworth Bess were placed in a cell noted for its strength and security. To make doubly sure that their distinguished prisoner should not escape, Jack was heavily ironed and fastened by a long chain to an iron bar that lay along the centre of the floor. Thus, though his movements were restricted, he was able to move about the cell.

THE spirits of the young robber were of the highest, and those who heard his jokes and watched his droll ways could hardly imagine that he was a desperate character and destined for Tyburn.

The prison-keepers had strict instructions to guard him carefully, and everyone who visited him was carefully searched.

On the third day an old man craved permission to see the prisoners, and was conducted by the turnkey to the cell where Jack and Bess were. He appeared to be a stranger and spoke a few words to the imprisoned pair.

A diversion of the turnkey's attention by Jack gave the old man his chance, and a package wrapped in a handkerchief was quickly passed to Edgeworth Bess and as quickly hidden.

When the turnkey and the visitor had departed Bess revealed the package.

"Blueskin is a true friend," laughed Jack, as he opened handkerchief revealed a file, a chisel, some gimlets, and a piercer. "Now we'll see if the New Prison is stronger than the Roundhouse."

It was now Whit Monday, and, having hidden the tools away as securely as the barely-furnished cell would allow, the pair waited patiently till midnight.

The hours dragged by, and the prisoners' hearts beat rapidly when the turnkey inspected the cell before leaving them for the night.

Would he find the tools?

They tried not to show anything unusual, but it seemed to them that he was more rigorous in his look-round than was his wont. At last they heard the door clang to and the key turned, and breathed more freely. The first danger was passed.

It was past midnight before Jack could make a move, but at length he started, and in an hour had got rid of his hateful fetters.

The windows of the cell were nine feet from the floor, devoid of glass, and, crossed by a heavy oak beam and thick iron bars, offered a formidable obstacle.

With the aid of Edgeworth Bess, Jack clambered up, and, clinging to the bars, viewed the situation. There was no other way out of the room, and he set to work with the file.

Hard and persistent work got him through two of the iron bars, but the file was no use on the oak beam. He therefore had recourse to the gimlet, and, by piercing a large number of holes close together at each end of the beam, he weakened it so considerably that a vigorous push brought it with a snap on to the floor of the cell.

The way of escape was clear, but they

were still twenty-five feet from the ground, and after that would be faced with the prison wall, standing over twenty feet in height.

But Jack believed in tackling one obstacle at a time. Persuading Bess to remove her gown and cloak, he quickly constructed a crude, but strong, rope, and, having wrenched the iron bars to one side, he helped her through the opening, and then lowered her to the ground.

The next problem was the wall, which was capped by an ugly-looking and dangerous system of iron spikes. Creeping stealthily up to the great wooden gates, he used his gimlets and piercers at steps, and by inserting them at intervals and taking advantage of every bolt-head and crevice, he at length reached the top.

The rope of clothes enabled him to draw up Edgeworth Bess, and, protected from the spikes by some of his own clothing, he lowered her on the other side, and in the early hours of the morning the pair left the New

there were scores of hiding-places available to such wily ones as Jack and Blueskin.

The importance of finding a criminal's women friends is now recognised, and Jonathan Wild, making no progress in other directions, turned his attention to Edgeworth Bess.

Capturing her in a public-house near the Temple Bar, he carried her off to his infamous house adjoining Newgate Prison, in the Old Bailey, and by those forcible means of which he was a past-master, made her disclose Jack's hiding-place.

Jack was hiding in Rosemary Lane with Blueskin's mother, and a raid by Wild and his gang resulted in the capture of Jack and his return to the New Prison.

Brought before Mr. Justice Blackerby, he was committed for trial at the August sessions at the Old Bailey.

During the fortnight preceding the trial, he did not relax his efforts to escape, and stringent methods were resorted to by the authorities.

An old journal of those days says:

"Several saws and other instruments proper for such a design (to escape) being found about his bed, he is since confined in an apartment called the Stone Room, kept close, and sufficiently loaded with irons to prevent his designs for the future."

On August 14th, 1724, he faced the Recorder and a jury, and was sentenced to death. Conveyed to Newgate Prison, he found himself in the condemned cell.

Prior to the twelfth century, there were four gates or main entrances to the City of London, and when a fifth gate was added, it naturally received the name of "Newgate."

For nearly three hundred years it was used as a place of imprisonment and punishment, and after being rebuilt and enlarged by the executors of Sir Richard Whittington, the famous Lord Mayor of London, it was utterly destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666.

At the time when Jack Sheppard was confined there, Old Newgate was a large and strongly-built prison, and the main front looked down the street now known as the Old Bailey, which now gives its name to the Central Criminal Court.

There were three distinct prisons in Old Newgate, the Master's Side, the Common Side, and the Press Yard. There were two condemned holds, or cells, one for women and one for men.

The one in which Jack now found himself was a large stone building, with a highly-arched, stone roof. The floor was covered with oak planking, and at intervals were ringbolts, staples, and hooks, to which the prisoners were attached by heavy chains. A small window, strongly grated, admitted little air and less light.

On August 31st, the death warrant for Jack arrived from Windsor, and the condemned hold was crowded throughout the day with visitors who desired to view such an elusive prisoner.

With such a criminal in their care, the warders did well. It is said that the

(Continued at foot of opposite page.)



Jack Sheppard, escaping from the Condemned Hold in Newgate, aided by Edgeworth Bess and Poll Maggot.

[From an old print.]

Prison behind them, a memorial to Jack's skill and courage. The date of that escape was May 25th, 1724.

The next two months were busy ones for Jack and his devoted henchman, Blueskin. Almost every day the news came to hand of some highway robbery, some house broken into, some merchant who had lost bundles of cloth or other valuables.

The pair of them were wanted by the forces of law and order. They were outlaws, with a price on their heads, and the only course open to them was to prey on those they could.

Jonathan Wild and his gang of robber-policemen scoured the country in search of the pair. London did not then consist of rows of houses and shops as it does now. Even to get to such near places as Finchley or Kilburn, one had to pass through open country, and

Coroners & Crime



The office of coroner is a very ancient one—yet how many have more than the foggiest notion of the coroner's job? The photograph given here is of Dr. Waldo, the City of London coroner.

THE coroner occupies a very important position in the administration of the law, and is frequently the first official to inquire into serious crimes.

It is his duty to hold an inquiry or inquest on all persons within the area which he covers if they have died in any sudden or violent manner; if they have died in prison, in a lunatic asylum, an inebriates' retreat, or what is usually known as a "baby farm"; or if there are grounds for thinking that suspicious circumstances are associated with the death.

Sometimes the coroner holds the inquest with the assistance of a jury, though, in cases where, by law, he is compelled to hold an inquest, even though there may be no suspicious circumstances, he often dispenses with their help.

The coroner's jury must consist of not less than twelve or more than twenty-three persons, and at least twelve must assent to the verdict. There are no special qualifications for a coroner's jury, except that they must be "lawful men" and householders.

All inquests are held *super visum corporis*; that is, the body has been viewed by the coroner and the jurymen.

Evidence is given on oath, and generally witnesses attend voluntarily, though the coroner has power to compel a reluctant witness to attend. Many of the rules of evidence recently given in

the Supplement* hold good when witnesses are being examined before a coroner by solicitors representing interested parties.

Notes are taken by the coroner of the evidence given, and he sums up and directs the jury as to the law on the matter, it being their duty to return the verdict as to the cause of death.

Sometimes the jury and the coroner disagree, as when at an inquest at Poplar the jury returned a verdict of "The murder was done unintentionally and on the spur of the moment."

The coroner pointed out that murder could not be unintentional, and refused to accept the verdict. The jury then retired again and returned a verdict of manslaughter.

While still disagreeing, the coroner had no choice but to accept the jury's finding, and he committed the prisoner for trial on that charge.

The office of coroner—or "crown"—dates back hundreds of years, the word originating from the Latin *corona*, a crown, a relic of the time when the office was principally associated with pleas of the Crown.

There are various kinds of coroners. There are those holding high judicial appointments who are coroners by virtue of their office. Thus, the Lord Chief Justice of England is the supreme coroner of England, with power to hold an inquest in any part of the kingdom. The puisne, or younger, judges of the King's Bench are sovereign coroners, and may exercise their jurisdiction in any part of the realm.

The three principal classes of coroners in England are county coroners, borough coroners, and franchise coroner. Prior to 1838 county coroners were elected by the freemen of the county, but the Local Government Act of that year gave power to the county councils to appoint them.

*See "In the Witness Box," page 57.
—Editor.

Borough coroners are appointed by the borough council, and franchise coroners are those with limited jurisdiction, such as the Duchy of Lancaster, the University of Oxford, or the City of London, and they are appointed by Royal grant.

In Scotland the official corresponding to the English coroner is called the Procurator-Fiscal.

The function of a coroner's court is only to accuse and not to try, and a verdict of manslaughter or murder against anyone by the coroner's jury is the same as the finding of a true bill by a Grand Jury.

In the event of such a verdict being returned, the accused is committed on a coroner's warrant to the assizes. It often happens that the first hearing of a case is before the local magistrate, and immediately follows the inquest.

THUS a murder may be committed and the supposed murderer be known and arrested. In accordance with the law, the coroner holds an inquiry into the death, and the jury returns a verdict of wilful murder against the prisoner, who can claim the right to be present at the inquest. The coroner, therefore, commits him for trial, the verdict being entered on parchment, under the seal of the jurors and coroner.

The alleged murderer, having been arrested by the police, is brought before the local magistrates or stipendiary, and the preliminary inquiry is heard; the justices, if they find a case is made out, also committing the prisoner for trial.

Occasionally, when the coroner's inquiry has been unusually lengthy, the hearing before the magistrates is not considered necessary, and the case goes straight to the Petty Jury at the assizes—the coroner's verdict being equivalent to the indictment of the Grand Jury.

(Continued on next page.)

(Continued from page 68.)

gate of the prison resembled the entrance to a fair, and a guinea a head was charged those who wished to see Jack Sheppard in the condemned hold. The warders regarded escape from the condemned hold as impossible.

Hiding the entrance to the cell was a partition wall, in which was a hatchway. About five feet from the ground, it was guarded by thick, iron spikes, which, fixed to the bottom of the hatchway, almost touched the top, leaving scarcely space for a hand between their points and the top of the hatchway.

Through this barred hatchway the condemned man talked with visitors. It looked out into the lodge, and here at a table were the gaolers and warders, whose duty it was to guard the prisoner.

Late in the day Edgeworth Bess and Poll Maggot arrived to say their last farewells to Jack Sheppard. As they were not allowed to enter the hold, Jack came to them at the hatchway, and the gaolers and turnkeys considerably retired to the end of the lodge.

Jack had already managed to partly saw through one of the spikes, and telling the two women to make a clamour, he rapidly completed the job of cutting through the iron bar.

The noise of crying and lamentation covered the grating of the saw as it cut through the metal, and in a few moments a gap was made. Through the gap Jack, with the aid of the two women, squeezed himself, and was at once covered with a hat and cloak.

Hiding between the burly forms of Edgeworth Bess and Poll Maggot, Jack

made his way out of the prison disguised as a woman. A coach took him to the Black Friars' Steps, and by river-boat he made his way to Westminster.

In Holborn he got rid of his fetters, and for ten days his escape from the condemned hold at Newgate Prison was the talk of the town. He had dodged Tyburn Tree once again.

But that fearsome figure of the "Three-legged Mare," with its dangling noose, still lay in wait for him. He was destined to be captured once again—and once again to make a break for liberty, which was to eclipse anything that had gone before.

How he escaped from the strongest part of Newgate—the "Castle"—and the scenes of his passing at Tyburn Tree, will be fully described in Part Two.

The coroner has the power to commit anyone for contempt of court, and to fine witnesses and jurors for failing to obey his summons to attend. The witnesses, when a verdict of murder or manslaughter is returned, are bound over to appear at the assizes to give evidence, and, in return for acting as witnesses at the inquest, receive a small fee and travelling expenses.

Jurors also receive a small fee for their attendance, though it may involve attending either only one or a number of inquests.

For business men this may mean great hardship.

JUST as in a police-court, all varieties of the genus witness appear, some voluble, some in tears, some indignant at being called, some having to have their evidence dragged out of them.

On one occasion it was noticed that the coroner appeared to be paying little attention to the evidence, and was hunting among the papers on his desk. Presently he seemed to have found what he was looking for and straightened up.

The case concluded, and, without apparently addressing anyone in particular, he said: "You perhaps thought I was not following the evidence just now. As a matter of fact, I thought I saw a flea among my papers, and was looking for it. I am glad to say I have caught it."

To the coroner's intense disgust, the story appeared the next day in the paper, under the heading, "An Unwilling Witness."

The verdicts returned vary, of course, according to the case and the nature of the evidence, and it is interesting to note that at the inquests held in the Tower of London during the War on the spies shot there the verdict was "justifiable homicide."

While coroners have the power to order the exhumation of a body, they usually obtain an order from the Home Secretary first. They can also instruct a medical man to hold a post mortem examination of a body for the purpose of ascertaining the cause of death.

In addition to the holding of inquests on dead bodies, the coroner also holds inquiries into the finding of treasure trove, the last one of this sort, at the time of writing, being held in Cheshire.

In the City of London, under the City of London Fire Inquests Act, 1888, inquests are held as to the cause of every fire in the City, and the coroner has power to return a verdict of arson against any person believed to have caused a fire. The latest statistics show that in 1922 there were fifteen such inquests. In three the verdict was that of incendiarism. This practice of holding fire inquests still exists in several European countries.

There are about 330 coroners in England, 200 being county coroners, seventy-six borough coroners, and fifty-four franchise coroners. In the last year for which figures are available, 1922, they conducted 30,800 inquests, and ordered 12,709 post mortem examinations. Their salaries totalled £80,628, and the expenses of the inquests held were £60,930.

Law Talks.—No. 9.

The Law of Street Accidents.

IT all depends on whether or not negligence entered into the circumstances, does the placing of the responsibility for an accident. That matter of negligence has upset many a promising action for damages, or compensation, too!

The law is very definite on the point, laying down a hard-and-fast rule as to what constitutes negligence. For example, a sportsman hands his loaded gun to a servant, telling him to unload it. Knowing nothing about firearms, the servant points the gun in the direction of the sportsman's son, who happens to be standing by, clumsily jogs the trigger—and the son is badly wounded.

There is an excellent example of negligence—on the part of the sportsman. The law holds him responsible for the accident, because it was on his orders that the gun was "unloaded," and he did not take due precautions to see that his command was safely carried out.

Guy Fawkes' Day generally brings its crop of accidents, the responsibility for which the police-courts then have the job of deciding. Some of the accidents are decidedly interesting—as, for instance, the case in which a lighted squib was pitched on to a barrow, was immediately picked up by the coster in charge, and flung sideways on to the barrow next in line—and so on, until, landing on the sixth barrow, the squib exploded, injuring the barrow owner severely.

Responsibility for that accident was laid at the door of the man who started the squib on its journey, no blame attaching to those who flung the firework from their barrows.

Every day one sees in the streets people carrying awkward parcels, tools, and other things which might easily cause injury to others. If such an accident results, and it can be shown by the injured party that the individual carrying the parcel, or tools, was not taking ordinary precautions against injuring others, the careless individual will be compelled to pay heavy damages.

But proof of negligence must be forthcoming. Negligent repair of roads places the local council, or county council, under a great responsibility, accidents arising therefrom being held by law to be a direct result of a neglect of due precautions. Also, should a sober pedestrian fall over a heap of stones or earth, or a firebucket, or tumble into a hole, whilst walking along a public thoroughfare, he can confidently sue the employer of the workman who, obeying his master, placed the obstacle there. The employer was acting negligently in not warning pedestrians of what was ahead.

If the employer could prove, however, that the pedestrian met with the accident as a result of his own carelessness, the latter would lose the case. It would be quite sufficient if the employer could produce witnesses to swear that the pedestrian, at the time of the mishap, was walking along reading instead of using his eyes to see where he was going.

The result would be no different if the careless pedestrian walked into an unpleasant ditch which ran by the roadside, and was unfenced, unless, of course, he could definitely prove that once upon a time the ditch had been fenced, but the fence having fallen into decay, there was now no protection such as the law requires shall be maintained.

DID YOU KNOW THAT—?

Some little-known facts of Law, which everyone should know—for it is held that ignorance of the Law is no excuse for breaking it—are here set out for the benefit of readers who "want to know."

ANYONE in the land who breaks the law is liable to suffer the consequences of his act, the only exceptions being children below the age of seven, the mentally deficient, and the King.

The mayor of a borough automatically becomes a Justice of the Peace for the term of his office and for twelve months afterwards.

A witness subpoenaed to attend a case and give evidence is not legally compelled to do so until he has been given or offered a sum of money by way of expenses.

An offence committed by a British subject while at sea may be tried by any court of justice in the British Empire in the jurisdiction of which he happens to be arrested.

If convicted of a felony, a Member of Parliament is compelled to vacate his seat in the House.

The King may pardon any illegal act, except a few uncommon offences.

It is illegal to hawk gunpowder or to expose it for sale in any public place, under penalty of a fine.

Larceny is the unlawful taking and carrying away of the goods of another

with the felonious intention of depriving the rightful owner of them.

A husband and wife are regarded as one person in law.

It is not illegal to sell food or drugs adulterated with a substance which is not injurious to health, and which is not added to increase the weight or bulk, or to conceal inferior quality. But the article must be labelled to show that it is adulterated.

It is an offence, punishable by fine, to paste placards or posters to pillar-boxes or post-offices.

Signalling at night from the coast to any person aboard a smuggling-boat is a misdemeanour, punishable by imprisonment.

Stamping names or words on current coin of the realm is illegal.

Any person may arrest another whom he finds committing an indictable offence by night.

"The intention is not the crime." The mere intent to commit a crime is not punishable, except in the case of treason. If the intention, however, is followed by any open act, in pursuance of his purpose, he is held to have attempted the crime.

**ABSOLUTE
AUTHORITY!**

(Continued from page 10.)

This they did. But Blake, who had taken a liking to the ne'er-do-well, caused him to be informed that there was still hope.

"We must not forget," Blake told Tinker, "that there is at least one witness of the struggle between the Tattersals upon the forecourt of the mill. I refer to Zenith the Albino. His evidence, I admit, is almost unobtainable, and might not be believed if obtained. But, somehow, I think that Zenith is destined to clear Claude Tattersal as regards the charge of murder. We shall see."

"In the meantime, the accused man is suspected of having caused the death of his other brothers. As regards this charge, I have hopes of clearing him within a few hours."

"I want you to return to the place we know of and resume your duties there while I get in touch with Inspector Coutts and prepare him to visit a snare which has been laid, a trap for a specimen of human vermin who should go to the gallows!"

Inspector Coutts found Blake immersed in some papers which he had obtained from a source unavailable even to Scotland Yard. Private wires had been busy, and a member of H.M. Secret Service—a charming young woman named Julia Fortune—had made a record run from Westminster with a document unique in the annals of government, a document which even the influential "Number 2A" had found it difficult to obtain.

The detective pulled over a thick file of papers labelled "Strictly Private and Confidential" and numbered with a serial number of the year 1901.

"Here," he told the inspector. "I have the confidential report of H.M. War Office concerning the tests of an asphyxiating gas invented by a man named Holzappell. The tests were without question, conclusive. The gas was a terrible weapon, and the experts advised that the sum of ten thousand pounds demanded by the inventor for the secret of its manufacture should be paid without demur."

"For the purpose of making the payment, as is clear from the file, certain officers waited upon the inventor within four days of the completion of the tests. They found him dead, murdered, and of the Great Secret they found no trace whatever."

"The matter was investigated—that goes without saying—but no clue was found to the identity of the murderers."

"Judging—wrongly, as we now know—from the attitude of a certain nation, the authorities came to the conclusion that that nation had secured the secret. And when the Great War began in nineteen hundred and fourteen, they expected that the new weapon would be brought into use."

"Each invention of our enemies or our Allies was mistaken in turn for the revelation of the Great Secret; but nothing used in the Great War approached the devastating effects of the lost formula."

"This," said Inspector Coutts, "is all very interesting—very interesting indeed. But I fail to see—"

"Wait a moment. I have not finished."

Blake threw the file aside, and began to fill his pipe.

"Acting on my instructions, Tinker has investigated the genealogy of the Tattersals. He has unearthed the interesting fact that the name of Tattersal dates only to nineteen hundred and fifteen. In that year the family decided that their pre-War name was offensively Teutonic, and applied for authority to adopt that of their mother's family—Tattersal. Their original name was Holzappell; and the father of these five unfortunate brothers was the inventor of the Great Secret!"

"Good heavens! That is the reason for the tea tragedies?"

"Unquestionably. The murderer somehow discovered that the secret was still in existence and set himself to wipe out the family—a clumsy, brutal, and unimaginative attempt to secure the secret, as I think!"

"But, if your conjectures are right, and the family inherited the secret, why did they not do what their father had intended—dispose of the formula to our Ministry for War?"

"I don't think they knew that it was in their possession."

"But surely—"

"You think that that is impossible? You are wrong. This Holzappell was a clever man. He did not say to his sons, 'Here is a secret worth thousands.' He said, 'Here is a satinwood box, which is to be treated as an heirloom, kept secret, and only opened in certain circumstances'—circumstances which we do not know."

"What happened? His wisdom proved itself at once. The sons, not knowing what they possessed, did not betray themselves, and the powerful agents who sought the secret came to the conclusion that it had died with its inventor. The years went by, and then—"

"By chance, and not knowing what tragedy it brought upon his family, one of them mentioned the matter of the heirloom to an individual who knew what the Tattersals' original name had been, and the secret of which their father had been possessed. That was enough. This individual—cleverer than the five brothers—instantly perceived that this satinwood box must contain the lost formula; and, being unscrupulous, determined to obtain it."

"What happened then? This individual—and I frankly admit that I have not the least idea who it was—approached the family, through a solicitor, with a view to purchasing the box and its contents."

"The brothers refused. The injunctions of their dead father were sacred to them. The box was not to be opened, except in circumstances which they did not reveal, and, until those circumstances transpired, was to remain in the personal possession of one or other of them."

"The terms of the will made it impossible for an outsider to tell in whose possession it might be at a given moment. That this unknown adventurer could not discover. Accordingly, with extraordinary thoroughness and brutality, he proceeded to narrow the issue by removing them, one after the other."

"The adventurer," commented Inspector Coutts, "is not only brutal but clever. He appears to have committed murder after murder without leaving the smallest of clues. Even now—"

"Now," said Blake, "we will proceed to place him under arrest."

Coutts sprang to his feet. "You're not kidding?" he said incoherently. "You can do that?"

"I think so," returned Blake. "I am not quite sure, but I think so."

He looked at his watch.

"It is," he remarked, "fifteen minutes to three. Before thirty minutes past I am prepared to wager that you will be escorting him to the station."

"Blake," said the inspector, "I haven't told you, but this is a serious matter for me. The papers have made no end of a fuss about our inefficiency in this matter, and Sir Henry Fairfax is decidedly unpleasant about it."

"He suggests that this adventurer chap is able to hoodwink me without any trouble, and even hints that he will put another man on the case. I—I am obliged to admit that I had no suspicion of the facts which you have just placed before me. Sir Henry is right. I am completely nonplussed. If you can do what you say—"

A doubt occurred to the inspector, and he relapsed into his chair.

"But, not five minutes ago, you told me that you had not the least idea who this adventurer was. Now you tell me that you hope to arrest him."

"That," Sexton Blake replied, "is the situation exactly. Put on your hat. We will go round to the place where I hope to meet him."

Accompanied by the Scotland Yard detective, Blake left the hotel and walked briskly in the direction of the Cattle Market.

He stopped before a door labelled "Sale To-day," and bearing a notice-board on which hung a catalogue of furniture.

"This is the place," he said.

They entered and found themselves in a large room, filled with lots of furniture, pictures, carpets, kitchen-ware, bedding, and even such personal possessions as bicycles and fishing-rods. Evidently the contents of several large houses was being sold, and the goods were now "on view."

Blake had a word with the auctioneer, whom he appeared to know, and then led the way to a corner of the sale-room which contained a handsome teak bureau, lot number 301.

"If," he said, "you will join me in a corner behind these bookcases, where we can see without being seen. I hope and believe that our man will reveal himself."

They stood there for some minutes, in a pretended inspection of the bookcases, while a considerable number of persons, of both sexes, passed and repassed.

Most of them possessed catalogues, and many made a more or less careful inspection of the bureau, lot number 301. Yet, to the inspector's surprise, Blake took little notice of any. He seemed to be awaiting a certain clue which passed Coutts' comprehension.

More than this, to Coutts' mystification, he did not even look at the bureau, although he had informed the inspector that this was the object of his interest.

Not directly, that is. But the inspector at length observed that the bookcase in front of Blake had glass doors, and that they reflected almost as well as a mirror. To a casual observer, he was interested in nothing but the bookcase; while, as Coutts now perceived, he was actually watching lot number 301 to the exclusion of everything else.

At length came a middle-aged man, short but extraordinarily broad, who took an interest in the bureau surpassing that of anybody else.

Like several others who had inspected

it, he opened all the drawers; but, unlike the others, he made the discovery that it contained a secret compartment at the side.

With his short, flat-ended fingers, he manipulated the hidden spring, opened the secret compartment, looked inside, closed it again, and drifted away to look at an oaken bedstead farther along the room.

"I can't decide," said the private detective, "whether this bookcase would fit into the corner I told you about. Of course, I ought to have taken measurements; but I forgot to do it. What do you think, Parkinson? Would it be too large?"

Had Blake's question been phrased otherwise, the inspector might have supposed that he really had the intention of buying the bookcase; but the fact that Blake rechristened him gave Coutts the clue.

"I really don't know," he said thoughtfully. "You mean it for your dining-room, don't you? You ought to get proper measurements before deciding, I think. When is the sale?"

"To-morrow. The stuff is on view from three until four to-day. They are selling it to-morrow. Yes, I think you're right."

The last words, despite Blake's intention to make them casual, had a ring of triumph which told Inspector Coutts that the denouement was near.

Instinctively, the inspector turned towards lot No. 301.

The broad man had returned, had again opened the hidden compartment, and now was placing in his pocket something which he had taken therefrom.

The look of guilt and fear which flashed across the man's face was sufficient to convince the inspector. He hardly waited to hear Blake's whispered: "Yes! Quickly!" before seizing the man by his arm.

"I arrest you," said Coutts, staking his whole reputation on Blake's assurance, "on a charge of—"

"On a charge," Blake interrupted quickly, "of stealing a satinwood box from that bureau."

The man laughed.

"Do you mean this?"

He took from his breast pocket a box about the size of a cigarette-case, and offered it for their inspection.

"This," he told them, "is my own property. I placed it in that compartment when I inspected the bureau about five minutes ago, and forgot to take it out again. I was merely trying to get an idea of the size of the compartment."

Blake took the box out of the man's hand.

"I observe," he said, "that this box is sealed up. Nevertheless, if it is your property, you doubtless know what is inside it."

"Certainly I do. There is a paper containing a certain formula which I use in my business."

"We will test that statement."

Blake broke the seal and opened the box. Inside, as the man had said, was a sheet of paper. Blake showed it to Inspector Coutts, and then passed it to their prisoner.

On the paper was written:

"Placed by me this day in the teak bureau lot No. 301. Signed Sexton Blake, in the presence of—"

And followed the name and qualifications of the auctioneer conducting the sale.

The smile left the lips of the accused man, to be succeeded by a twitching and a ghastly pallor. He knew then that the game was up.

He sank into a chair.

"I am faint," he said. "For Heaven's sake, bring me a glass of water."

A small crowd had collected; and, as the word went round that these were Inspector Coutts of the C.I.D., and the celebrated Sexton Blake, they knew that they were present at a happening of importance.

Some officious person secured a glass of water, and, with the permission of Inspector Coutts, offered it to their prisoner.

As the white and shaking wretch took the tumbler, Blake seized his hand, prised open his fingers, and took therefrom a small bottle filled with colourless liquid.

"You won't need this," he said.

The man uttered a curse—a vile epithet from the argot of Bavarian slums—and tried to knock the phial from Blake's grasp.

"This," said Blake, "I hand to you for sealing, Inspector Coutts. It contains, I imagine, a vegetable alkaloid poison."

Half an hour later, when Coutts had handed their prisoner over to the county police, Blake explained how the arrest had been engineered by himself.

"Acting on my advice," he said, "the Tattersal family—or what remains of them—allowed it to be known that they

was using dreadful and desperate means to localise it. As we know, the secret had been seized by Zenith; but this knowledge, as we had reason to suppose, since Zenith works alone, was hidden from him. He supposed that one of the surviving brothers had charge of it.

"Excuse the interruption," put in Inspector Coutts, "can you tell me why it was that the Tattersals retained this dangerous possession, instead of lodging it in safety at, say, a safe deposit?"

"That," said Blake, "is a question answered by the terms of old Holzapf's will. He trusted nobody, not even the officials of a safe deposit. The satinwood box was to remain in the custody of the legatees. Claude Tattersal, if you remember, confirmed this information himself.

"To continue. I perceived that this desperate adventurer, whose methods were so terribly thorough, would not allow a considerable amount of furniture to pass out of the possession of the Tattersals without making quite sure that it did not include the receptacle of the satinwood box. The Tattersals, remember, had no adequate idea of the value of the box and its contents. They might even be careless enough to leave it in furniture destined for the sale-room, especially in the disturbance of repeated tragedy.

"Perceiving this, I laid a trap by placing within an easily-discovered hiding-place a more or less exact copy of the satinwood box. The rest you know. Our man behaved as I expected—examined the furniture and attempted to steal the box."

"And how do you know," questioned Coutts, "that this man I have arrested is not merely a dishonest frequenter of the sale-room who found a box which others had overlooked, and slipped it into his pocket?"

"The man himself told me."

Blake smiled.

"Told you? When? How? I heard every word that he said."

"You heard, then, that he had some idea what was inside the box, sealed as it was. Where did he get that idea? Further, you forget the phial of colourless liquid which I took from his hand."

"The Government analysts have been at work on the traces of poison which it was possible to isolate during post-mortem upon the victims; and they have discovered the astonishing fact that the colourless and flavourless liquid used by the murderer was perfectly harmless by itself, but, in combination with tannin, instantly fatal. Hence the fact that the fatalities always followed the drinking of tea."

"We shall find that at some time between breakfast and teatime on the day of his victim's death, this fellow we have arrested had drunk with the victim. The properties of the poison are such that he might have taken considerable quantities himself—as, indeed, he probably did—so long as he did not also take food or drink containing tannin."

"It was fiendishly clever; because he did not poison his victim: only rendered him subject to fatal poisoning by a very common and innocent beverage."

"If we had allowed our man to take the contents of that phial, he would have been none the worse, until, later on, his request for a cup of tea had been complied with. Then he would have died as certainly as the Tattersals died."

"I am morally sure that our man attempted to commit suicide. Why? Because he had been caught in a trivial theft? Not much, my dear Coutts—not much. It was the act of a murderer who sees retribution approaching."

"Retribution," supplemented Coutts.

WHICH STORY— WHICH FILM?

—well, that's our secret for the present, but you'll know all about it soon. Take it for granted that it's a big U. J. "stunt." You'll be interested. Watch for further details.

had decided to sell the effects of the brothers who were dead. They did actually proceed to sell certain articles of furniture, including the bureau which is lot No. 301."

"I take you," said Coutts, in his best manner. "Yes, carry on, Blake."

The inspector was in high good humour.

Instead of being devoid of any clue to the Tea Tragedies, he had actually made an arrest, and he knew that the newspapers would record the fact with due prominence.

"Tea Murderer Run to Earth. Inspector Coutts' Dogged Persistence." Some such headlines as this already took shape in his mind. Nevertheless, he now very humbly waited for the continuation of Sexton Blake's remarks. Until he knew the means by which Blake had achieved the arrest, he felt himself to be in a weak position.

He found that, as usual, the private detective showed no desire to crow about his success. On the contrary, Blake described the deduction which had led to that momentous vigil in the sale-room as if it were elementary, even obvious.

"You see," he said, as soon as the inspector's immediate needs in the way of tobacco and refreshment were attended to, "after reading the file and obtaining Tinker's report as to Tattersal's antecedents, it was quite clear to me that the Tea Tragedies had some connection with the Great Secret."

"I deduced, as I have told you, that some person who knew of its existence,

"I take off my hat to you, my dear Blake. Although we have lost the Great Secret—"

"Lost it!" exclaimed Blake. "I am not so sure of that."

"You mean?"

"Merely that I have not yet abandoned hope. Certainly, Zenith has secured the formula; but I am able to assure you that he has not yet disposed of it. How can I be sure? Because it is not a matter to be trusted to the postal authorities. Zenith will be asking a big price for the secret, and will assuredly make it the subject of a personal deal. He is not negotiating the sale in this country, consequently he must travel by ship or aeroplane."

"There are a thousand-and-one ways of leaving this country, and a thousand of them are being watched both by the police and by the Secret Service."

"Zenith is, I admit, a past-master of disguise; but he does not possess Leon Kestrel's secret of altering the colour of the eyes, and his crimson irises would undoubtedly betray him."

"In the ordinary way, he might squeeze through, as I have no doubt he has done many times before. But this secret is a vital one for the Empire; extraordinary precautions are being taken, and he knows it."

"A thousand probable exits are being watched by both services. I base my hopes on the thousand-and-first, which is being watched by Tinker."

"After the affair at the mill, you will remember, we tracked Zenith by means of my bloodhound, until, outside St. Faith's, he managed to destroy the scent. After that, I set Tinker to work to plot his course upon a map. We discovered that it was not aimless dodging of pursuit, but had a fixed direction. It was possible to continue, by guesswork, the line of his escape; and this we went over very carefully for several miles, trying to discover his objective. Well, I think we succeeded."

"On the edge of Mousehold Heath, a large common on the outskirts of this city, there is an estate privately owned, and surrounded by a high wall. The owner seems to be above suspicion; but that cuts no ice; all Zenith's agents are above suspicion. The fact remains that on that estate there is a dirigible balloon."

"Tinker is watching the balloon, and, as he is equipped with a portable wireless transmitting station, I am in constant touch with him."

"Trespassing—eh?" The inspector's eyes twinkled. "This is serious! I'll run the young rascal in—you see if I don't."

"And you," he continued, "you, Blake, you old fraud, I wondered why you had taken such a sudden interest in broadcasting that you had to have a special aerial draped about this respectable hotel. I must say, to be serious again, that I think your train of reasoning pretty thin. Why should—"

He was interrupted by the high note of a buzzer.

Blake rose and picked up the telephone which hung beside his four-valver.

"Thin?" he agreed. "Of course it is. Little short of hopeless I admit; but it's our all. This is Tinker calling. I wonder if there's anything fresh."

He listened.

"Hallo, guv'nor, 2 Toe calling—"

The transmission was so strong as to be audible to Inspector Coutts, several feet away.

"—couldn't get you before. The balloon is nearly filled. Come quickly. I —"

Blake put down the phones, turned, with a face suddenly white.



A smart-looking lance-corporal calmly awaited him. "Good-evening, Sexton Blake," said the familiar voice of Zenith the Albino. "If you move you die!" said the detective. "Where is the satinwood box?" (Page 24.)

"What was that?" asked Coutts.

"The sound of a shot," replied the detective. "If they have hurt that boy —"

Coutts was at his heels when they reached the garage outside.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Absolute Authority!



BLAKE drove towards Mousehold at a pace which, at any ordinary time, would have frightened Inspector Coutts into agonised protest; but the big-hearted inspector thought a lot of Tinker, and was, for the moment, as reckless as Blake himself.

A short distance beyond the cavalry barracks, which mark the fringe of greater Norwich, they came to a high, brick wall; and, shortly afterwards, to a pair of iron gates, surmounted on either side by the crest of an ancient family.

"This is the place," said Blake, and, jumping out of the car, tugged at the bell-handle.

"This?" repeated Coutts, astonished. "This is the country seat of Sir Thomas Barwick. I was here once before on a case. He is a patriot and a gentleman—you may take my word for it. I know he's interested in aeronautics, and I have heard that he possesses a dirigible balloon; but it's incredible that he should be in league with Zenith."

"If everything is straight," said Blake concisely, "why isn't the bell answered?"

The jangling of the heavy bell, inside the neighbouring gate-lodge, had been audible where they stood; but the smokeless chimneys and the curtained windows gave no sign of life, and the summons of the bell remained unanswered.

The gates were fastened by an old-fashioned dead-lock, a type which would defy any picklock, because of its heavy bolt and powerful spring.

Blake re-entered the car.

"Stand clear," he warned the detective. "The house is nearly a mile away, and we haven't time to do it on foot. I'm going to break in these gates."

"How are you going to do that?" asked the inspector.

"With the car, of course. I don't think it will put it out of action; if it does, we sha'n't be much worse off. Stand clear!"

He backed as far as the narrow road would allow, and then, throwing the gears into top speed, swerved into the middle of the frail structure.

The bonnet was torn away, the headlamps smashed, one of his wings was doubled back on the tyre; one of the gates, broken from its hinges, fell within a few inches of the back-folded hood; but Blake was through and unhurt. Before Coutts had run to join him he had straightened the buckled wing, and within sixty seconds of the assault they were again travelling at their highest speed.

Coutts made some congratulatory comment, but Blake did not answer. His face was set and intent; the one fact which occupied the whole of his thoughts was Tinker's danger, and the need for reaching the lad quickly.

The drive reached the house by a well-planned curve, which gave them view of the place for some minutes before they

arrived. It was, to all appearances, as unattended as the lodge had been.

"Give 'em a ring," ordered Blake. "If there's no answer, I'll run in through their windows. No time to lose."

Coutts jumped out while the car was still in movement, and knocked and rang at the great door, without regard for the nerves of the occupants, if there were any.

At the same time Blake backed the car across the lawn, which ran level with the sills of wide, high windows at the side.

"Any answer?" he shouted.

"No."

The reply was followed by a crash of glass. One of the windows was in ruins, and Blake, with the car, had disappeared into the interior of the house.

He smashed a standard lamp, collided heavily with a grand piano, and then calmly stopped his engine, and sprang out, and ran through the inner door into the broad hall, which, with its minstrels' gallery, was one of the features of the house.

"Anybody here?" he shouted.

And then himself furnished the reply.

At the head of a large table, littered with the remains of a meal or two, sat a big, white-haired man, a fine specimen of the English country squire. He was gagged with a napkin, and securely bound to his chair by means of a bell-rope.

Blake whipped out the gag.

"I am Sexton Blake," he said, "a private detective. Do you know anything of my assistant—Tinker?"

"I do," replied the old man. "I must prepare you for bad news. I am very much afraid that the scoundrelly mountebank who forced his company upon me has murdered him. The lad interfered with his plans for stealing my dirigible."

"But," said Blake, "I myself spoke with Tinker not fifteen minutes ago."

"Probably. But that crimson-eyed villain was here less than five minutes ago, boasting of what he had done. He is boarding my airship now. Get away out and deal with him. Don't worry about me."

Blake turned without another word and ran through the house.

He found the back door open, but on the threshold he stopped and turned back.

The whirr of a large engine came to his ears, and the great silvery bulk of the dirigible emerged from among the trees.

"Back to the car!" he called out, turning. "Come along, Coutts!"

He rushed back to the room where the battered car stood, and, without another glance at the master of the house, backed it again on to the lawn.

It had almost ceased to resemble a car, with windscreen, wings, bonnet, and lamps all gone. But, miraculously, it still functioned as a means of rapid travel.

Coutts, stout as he was, had to run full speed to board it. Blake would not have waited.

"But," said the inspector, still standing upon the footboard and holding on to the top edge of the door, "what about Tinker?"

Blake turned on him a face so tortured that it was hardly human.

"Tinker's," he said, "is only one life. There, in that blimp that you see above the trees, Zenith carries a million. Perhaps the lad is dead; possibly he lives. Even, dead or alive, he is in that airship which we are pursuing. In any case, if by so doing I could save him, I would not turn a yard out of my course. I have been entrusted with a great responsibility, and with powers such as have been given to one man only twice in a hundred years, and have never been used before in the history of this country. I cannot stop because Tinker's life is in danger, or yours, or mine, or anybody's. I have a duty to do."

Blake pointed with one hand at the airship. The other gripped the wheel.

"I have to stop that man!"

He had taken a different road on the return, and now he drove the battered car through a hedge, and went at full speed bumping over the coarse grass of an aerodrome.

In the distance was an aeroplane, into which the pilot was just ascending. Blake fired his automatic into the air to attract their attention, and drove the car alongside.

"I want your aeroplane," he said, "and a machine-gun. I am Sexton Blake, and I have an Absolute Authority."

The pilot, a young officer, descended quickly.

"Yes," he said, "we were warned. Let me see your authority, please."

Blake took from his breast-pocket a sheet of parchment, and, without allowing it to leave his hands, offered it for the inspection of the other.

It was draped like a Christmas-tree with the seals of the entire Cabinet, and

signed "George R.I." It bore the photograph of Sexton Blake.

The officer read:

"Know all men by these presents: That our beloved and faithful servant, Sexton Blake, is, for the space of twenty-four hours, from twelve o'clock midnight on the eleventh of January of this year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and twenty-five, invested with all powers over all and sundry our subjects whatsoever. To which our Ministers of State have set their hands and seals. Given at our Court of St. James."

And followed a date and the Royal signature.

The officer saluted.

"I am at your service, Mr. Blake."

"I want," the detective repeated, "an aeroplane and a machine-gun. This gentleman"—and he indicated Inspector Coutts—"will accompany me. A two-seater will do. I will pilot the machine myself. You yourself, with a second aeroplane and gun, had better follow me. Our object is to bring down that blimp which is just disappearing into the clouds in the distance. It must be destroyed at any cost. Get the engine started. I will give you one minute to find us some overalls."

The officer was a man of action. He sprang into the battered car which had brought Blake and Inspector Coutts thither, and drove recklessly towards the hangars. Before the minute was over he was back. Within two minutes Blake was taxi-ing across the aerodrome, his hands and feet controlling the machine.

They swung round over Sir Thomas Barwick's house, where the knight was still engaged in freeing his servants and getting his disordered establishment arranged, and then headed for the spot where they had last seen the blimp.

"Think we shall catch him?" asked Coutts.

"We must!" was Blake's reply.

He thrust the Absolute Authority into Coutts' hands.

"Read that!" he said. "I may have to give you an order, and there will be no time for questions then."

Inspector Coutts read the precious document and returned it.

"I am at your service," he replied stiffly.

In all their previous transactions it had been he who gave orders, Blake who suggested them. Now it was for Blake to give orders, for him to obey. He accepted the situation without demur.

Blake released one hand to thrust the Absolute Authority into his breast-pocket. But he said no word. His gaze was fixed on the clouds ahead, watching for the silver shadow of the blimp drifting across the cloud-field like a dace in a rippled stream.

For twenty minutes, during which period the fast aeroplane may have traversed as many miles, he watched in vain.

"The light is fading," he muttered despairingly.

And then:

"Is that lieutenant coming along with the second plane?"

The second plane was in sight, a mile behind and a thousand feet above. Coutts told him, and Blake continued:

"Get the transmitting set going, and see if you can call him up. Find out whether he has a searchlight."

In the cockpit was a five-valver. The aerial trailed behind. Obediently the inspector switched on and rotated the tuning-dial.

"Hallo, hallo, Sexton Blake! Plane

BOOKS OF SPORT, SCHOOL, AND ADVENTURE.

Long Bright Stories for Long Dark Evenings!

The
Boys'
Friend
Library

No. 749.—CORINTH FOR THE CUP!

A Splendid Footer Yarn of League Fights and Cup-ties. By JOHN W. WHEWY.

No. 750.—LUCKY DENNISON.

A Grand Circus Yarn, packed with Excitement and all the Fun of the Fair. By WALTER EDWARDS.

No. 751.—THE WRECK OF THE "BOMBAY CASTLE."

A Thrilling Story of Schoolboy Fun and Adventure on Sea and Land. By DUNCAN STORM.

No. 752.—THE SIXTH FORM AT HAYGARTH.

A Topping New and Original Story of the Four Mats and their Chums at Haygarth School. Specially written by JACK NORTH.

No. 367.—THE CASE OF THE EED CREMONAS.

A Tale of Baffling Mystery and Clever Detective Work, featuring the Popular Characters, GILBERT and EILEEN HALE.

No. 368.—THE SECRET OF THE MANSIONS.

A Romance of Strong Detective Work and Thrilling Adventure. By the Author of "Fint No. 4," etc., etc.

No. 369.—MISSING IN MEXICO; or, The Case of the Living Dead.

A Story of SEXTON BLAKE in MEXICO and TEXAS.

No. 370.—THE AMAZING AFFAIR OF THE RENEGADE PRINCE.

A Tale of ZENITH THE ALBINO.

The
Sexton
Blake
Library

NOW ON SALE.

PRICE FOURPENCE EACH!

O 5 calling! Hallo, hallo! Plane O 5 calling, and changing over!"

Good! Blake's first order had been complied with, in part at least.

But the wireless man in the other aeroplane was "changing over." Was his wave-length the same as theirs? This remained to be seen.

Coutts risked it.

"Hallo, plane O 5!" he said. "Sexton Blake calling and changing over."

Instantly came the reply:

"Glad we've got you. Been trying for five minutes. Blimp's in our view to south-east. What shall we do?"

"Tell him," said Blake, "to shoot her down. I'm climbing that extra thousand feet now."

"Suppose," said Coutts, "that Tinker is on board?"

"Obey orders!" Sexton Blake snapped. And thereafter the inspector raised no question.

Ipswich had been left behind, and now Colchester was just visible through the breaks in the clouds. Zenith was making for the Channel for France. He was, as they now saw, several miles ahead, and, as they conjectured, holding his course from stratum to stratum of favourable wind. His speed was nearly as great as theirs.

And the grey wings of night were folding about the sky.

A train, with lighted windows, belching smoke and flame from the funnel of its engine, crawled slowly towards Chelmsford. They left it behind and rushed through the upper air over the distant radiance of the lighted streets.

Then that landmark was gone, and only the dawning moon kept them company.

"I reckon," said Blake, "that we are over the coast. Tell plane O 5 to start his searchlight, and get in touch with the military authorities. If we bring the blimp down, I shall want men—a hundred men—to see that none escapes. If it's over sea, the Navy must put out a couple of patrol boats or destroyers and sink the whole issue."

Coutts sent out the required message, and immediately a white beam quivered through the shadows, and the distant blimp became a leaf-shaped ship of golden light.

Watchers on English shores saw the beam and the object upon which it bore. From here and there, patrol aeroplanes began to climb in wide spirals to the high air. The hunt was up, and every plane was called by Inspector Coutts, with the help of aeroplane O 5.

All received the same order, with the Absolute Authority of Sexton Blake—"destroy the blimp."

Having called H.Q. and received the assurance that Blake was to be obeyed, they mounted belts of cartridges, tested searchlights, and cursed mechanics to provide an extra turn of speed. The doom of Zenith was written in letters of fire.

Blake himself was the first to engage her.

Mile after mile he gained a few yards, until, with Southend five thousand feet under his keel, he was running neck and neck with the blimp.

"Give her a burst!" he ordered. And Coutts, who was already sighting the machine-gun, obeyed him.

A gush of flame came from the muzzle of the gun, and a dark stream of bullets pumped into the big flank of the gas-bag.

Instantly she dropped a hundred feet or so, but Blake followed, coming back in a long curve to engage her again.

The blimp was now travelling inland. If Zenith's intention had been to make

the shore of France, he had now changed it.

He had reason, indeed, to abandon any intention except that of escaping with his life; for Coutts had scored heavily and the dirigible was leaking like a colander. One of its engines was out of commission, and the wonder was that any human being of its crew remained alive.

Nevertheless, it continued under control, and, although rapidly sinking towards the earth, maintained a direction towards some spot which, at length, Blake guessed at.

"Zenith's making for the downs," he said. "He'll go to earth there. You will remember that, in the little matter of the jigsaw puzzle" he used a dirigible from a deep valley behind Eastbourne? If he once makes that dip, he'll be in a very strong position. Give him another belt."

Coutts obeyed, and the pilot of O 5 swooped from above to drop an incendiary bomb; but, with uncanny suddenness, the blimp dropped through the clouds, and the humped outlines of the downs rose to meet them.

Portable searchlights were already at work upon the hilltops, and, in obedience to Blake's wireless instructions, a landing-place had been prepared. He made a perfect landing two minutes after Zenith had docked.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Zenith's Last Card.



THE downs which, at that time of year, would ordinarily have been abandoned to the darkness and the bleak wind, were covered with men and lighted by searchlights.

The particular spot where Zenith had gone to earth was ringed by soldiers two deep, with fixed bayonets.

Their orders were to let no one escape alive from that pit in the virgin chalk where the albino had once resided. Blake was taking no chances.

He knew quite well that Tinker might be there. The wily albino was not unlikely to have taken the lad as a hostage. But Zenith was peculiarly gifted in evading capture, and, if he escaped now, thousands of British lives might pay forfeit. Therefore, as has been said, Blake was prepared to sacrifice anything up to a thousand men in order to hold him.

"Remember," he shouted through a megaphone, as the cordon closed in, "nobody is to escape from this pit alive! You have ball cartridge in your rifles, and you must use it! It does not matter who he is or what he says. He must die. Those are my orders to you. Now! Keep the cordon unbroken, and advance, slowly."

"This," said an officer whose name is a household word, "is a terrible responsibility you are taking, Mr. Blake."

"It is," Blake replied, with a set face "but it is my responsibility. Have your officers posted the machine-guns as I instructed?"

"Yes; they are in position to riddle any man who shows himself."

"See that they don't hesitate. I am still afraid that our man will escape."

"Escape!" the soldier laughed. "Impossible, Mr. Blake. You have made

"See 'The Strange Case of the Jigsaw Puzzle.'—U.J. No. 1062.—Editor.

sure, and doubly sure, of that. Any living soul within that pit is doomed. The men are closing in now. It will soon be over."

The double ring of men was converging upon the pit and, as they concentrated, the ring became treble, then fourfold. And the finger of every man trembled upon his trigger.

In the stark glare of the searchlights they seemed more numerous, more formidable, than by day. That this army should attack a group whose numbers could not exceed a round dozen, appeared ridiculous. It was ridiculous. But Blake was not taking risks—he could not afford to. He was making sure—quite sure of annihilation. The Secret must be saved, for the peace of the world.

The cordon closed in, like a noose, until it stood upon the brink of the pit, then, with a clattering of machinery and a rattling of guns, a huge shape humped itself out of the pit and crawled away towards the sea.

It was the only thing which could cancel out Blake's plans as a parent might cancel out the plans of his infant—a heavily armoured tank.

How long Zenith had possessed the thing, or where he had concealed it, was never discovered. It was his last resource, the final proof of his constant boast that he was always prepared for failure.

"Keep a ring round the tank!" shouted Blake, and the unwieldy thing moved away, the centre of a small army.

Even a tank could not dive from Beachy Head into the sea, nor rise like a bird into the air. It might be that the secret was as safe there as in the threatened pit; but the postponement of its finding was little to Blake's liking.

He issued rapid orders that what had applied to the pit now applied to the tank. None was to remain alive of all its crew. Its escort broke into a trot, and moved away, an unbroken but moving circle of determined men.

And the searchlights followed its every movement.

A half a mile away it came to grief upon a steep gully, the wet chalk of which merely crumbled beneath its caterpillar track.

Instantly a white flag was displayed from the turret, and Blake moved forward to parley.

"Hallo, you in the tank!" he called out, risking his life without thought.

A voice from within answered him.

"Tell the soldiers not to shoot, and we will come out!"

Blake lifted his megaphone.

"So long as I hold my hand above my head," he ordered, "you will not shoot. If I drop my hand you will shoot to kill, without worrying about me. Now then, Zenith, come out and show yourself!"

"Zenith," replied a man, emerging from the tank "is not with us. This little trip in a tank is only (what shall I say?) a diversion. It would have continued for much longer, but for the fact that your confounded soldiers are bringing up a three-inch gun, and our armour-plate is not proof against such projectiles.

"If we could manoeuvre, I shouldn't mind; but, as it is"—he shrugged his shoulders—"this greasy chalk has spoiled the game."

"Close in," ordered the detective, "and take these men prisoners. See that they communicate with nobody. Search them, and bring their possessions to me."

He turned and hurried back towards the pit.

The place was now in darkness, the

The CONFEDERATION Again—Hooray!

YES, next week will see the publication of the long-awaited story of Professor Jason Reece and the Criminals' Confederation. Only seven more days! You must book your order for the "U. J." for certain this time!

You will remember the last episode in the history of Reece's gang—how the professor, after his liberation from the French convict-island of Tutea, came to London in search of the steel box and the Confederation's treasure left behind by his dead brother; and how Fan Too, the head of the Chinese branch of the Confederation, succeeded in getting them first.

You will recall, too, how Fan Too captured John Fade, the explorer, and the Duchess of Jorsica—Ysabel de Ferre—and took them off to the South Atlantic, where they were to be forced to reveal the hiding-place of diamonds hidden on the island of St. Madros.

Sexton Blake, pursuing them aboard a steam-yacht, is tricked, and the vessel is not taken to St. Madros, but to another island, where Blake and his party are marooned—for the vessel had been captained by a member of the Confederation.

Meantime, John Fade and the Duchess have escaped from Fan Too, only to be picked up by a ship owned by Professor Reece himself.

That is the intriguing situation which occurred at the end of the last Confederation story ("The Mandarin's Millions"—No. 1,097). Next week's brilliant yarn—and it really is brilliant—will carry us on from that point to situations even stranger.

"Found—and Lost!" is the title of it, and the yarn is absolutely crammed with exciting and breathless incident, and brings in all the actors of this thrilling drama. Incidentally, it brings to a close the present phase of the Confederation's activities, and the next yarn, to be published a week or so after, will tell how Reece shoots off at another tangent—to South America this time.

But of that more later. Meantime, don't miss this number, or you will break the continuity of the series.

FOUND—AND LOST! —NEXT WEEK!



more intense because of the white glare which had preceded it. Half-way down the gully which led thereto, Blake stumbled over the form of a man, a big man dressed only in his underclothes.

"Hallo!" grumbled the man, sitting up and running a hand through his hair. "I've been knocked out, I suppose!" And then: "Blow it, where's my clothes?"

The answer was provided by a scattered heap of thin dark garments lying upon the slope of the hill, and revealed by the flickering light of a match.

They were evening clothes of ultra-fashionable make, and Blake did not have to guess twice as to the identity of their late owner.

After a few rapid questions, he ran back to an eminence from which he could command a large area of the field of battle, and issued further orders.

"Zenith," he shouted, "the man we are seeking, has escaped in the clothes of a lance-corporal, East Sussex regiment. Spread out and search the downs, skirmishing order, all men. Shoot him on sight!"

As he wheeled to make sure that his order was receiving intelligent obedience, he perceived a flickering light amid a clump of furze two hundred yards away.

He saw instantly that it was an electric torch being used to signal, and stood still to read off its Morse message.

"S-e-x-t-o-n B-l-a-k-e. I a-m Z-e-n-i-t-h. W-i-l-l s-u-r-r-e-n-d-e-r t-o y-o-u."

Blake drew his automatic, and, ordering a junior officer to follow, walked over to the clump of furze from which the signal had come.

A smart-looking lance-corporal awaited him, a soldier whose eyes, in the light of an electric torch, glowed red as rubies.

"Good evening, Sexton Blake," said the familiar deep voice of Zenith.

Blake covered him.

"If you move, you die," he said.

"Where is the satinwood box?"

"That," said Zenith, "is what I am

about to tell you, if we can agree to terms."

"Either," said Blake, "you give me the box here and now or I put a bullet through your head."

"I have the box," replied the albino, "or, at least, I know where it is. If you shoot me I don't think you will find it, and someone else may. My price for the box, with seals unbroken, is my freedom. I heard your orders, knew that the game was up, that I did not stand a dog's chance of escape, with the Downs alive with men, and decided to make personal arrangements with you."

"Always very agreeable, he added smoothly, "these little interludes of conversation, my dear detective. What is your answer? Do we deal, or—"

"Lieutenant," ordered Blake, without taking his eyes from those of the albino, "run your hands over this man's pockets!"

The soldier obeyed.

"Empty, I think, sir," he reported.

"Our military friend is right," said Zenith, "my pockets are empty. The box is not in my possession. But if you will guarantee my freedom of unobserved action for twelve hours I will lead you to the spot where it is hidden."

Blake reflected. The Downs are wide, and full of possible hiding-places. Even in the ten minutes which Zenith had had since his knocking-out of the lance-corporal, he might have hidden the box with considerable success. If now he put a bullet through the albino's head, or, what was more to his liking, took the crook a prisoner, then he might discover the box. Quite probably he would; but—and here was the doubt—he might not, might even be anticipated by some hostile agent, in whose hands it would work incalculable harm.

"I agree!" he said.

The albino smiled.

"I thought you would," he murmured, "and may I say that I am relieved. My life, since I crossed swords with you, has taken on a new interest. You cannot conceive how dull it is to circumvent policemen. Please do me the honour to follow me!"

It was characteristic of the relations between Blake and the albino that the man did not ask any guarantee, other than Blake's word. He understood men. He knew that Blake's word was sacred.

His hiding-place, when they found it, was merely a hole dug by the point of a bayonet in the springy turf of the Downs, but effective enough. Short of stripping the turf for a mile in every direction, they could never have found it unaided.

Blake took the sealed box in his hands with a prayer of thanksgiving. The Great Secret was safe.

He turned to the young officer who had accompanied him.

"You are to take this gentleman to the foot of the Downs and supply him with everything that he considers necessary to make good his escape."

To Zenith he said:

"One question. Where is my assistant, the lad Tinker?"

"Tinker," replied the albino, "I carried as a hostage. It has been necessary to bind him, otherwise he is unhurt. You will find him in the pit."

"The pit!" said Blake aghast. "I ordered the extermination of every soul there."

"I hope——" began the albino.

But exactly what he had hoped Blake did not stay to hear. He was running at top speed down the slope towards the gully which led to the pit.

Half-way there he was challenged, and compelled to stand while a patrol inspected his credentials. This gave him an opportunity to order the cease fire, which he did.

Then he hurried on, with the dreadful thought in his mind that he had ordered the destruction of the lad who was his truest friend. Would he be in time?

The wrecked and deflated blimp lay upon the bottom of the pit. He had already completed a quick and fruitless search when a couple of private soldiers, who were taking advantage of the "cease fire" to light their cigarettes, recognised him and saluted.

"Did you," he asked anxiously, "find anybody here?"

"Only one," they answered, "a lad, down there, beneath the fabric of that balloon, and he's dead already."

"Dead! Tinker dead!"

Blake rushed across to the blimp and tore the fabric aside.

Tinker, his arms still bound to his sides, lay on the chalk, beside the shattered cabins. He was white to the lips, and deathly still.

Blake carried him clear of the wreckage, cut his bonds, and placed a hand over his heart.

Then, with a cry of relief, he began to use artificial respiration.

The lad was gassed, that was all. Gassed by the hydrogen from the deflated blimp. Ten minutes' hard work brought him back to consciousness, and in half an hour he was able to stand.

They travelled to Eastbourne in a military car, and, while a special train was arranged for, Blake gave the lad some supper, and told him the happenings of the night.

"I sha'n't feel comfortable," he finished, "until I hand this box to Number 2A. The responsibility is rather more than I care about."

"I was afraid," he resumed, after a

pause, "from the sound of a shot which I heard, and from what the soldiers told me, that—well, that you and I, my dear lad, had hunted together for the last time."

Tinker grinned.

"You had reason, guv'nor. The shot that you heard was actually fired at me, and, as you know, when Zenith fires to kill it is somebody's funeral. But, as you also know, I had my transmitter in the lower branches of a tree, and a small branch, on to which I was holding, stopped his bullet."

"I fell from the tree, however. My knee got me under the jaw, and knocked me right out. Zenith found me there, still very shaky, twenty minutes afterwards, and decided to carry me as a hostage on the blimp. His surprise at finding me alive was enough to make a cat laugh."

"Equalled only," said Blake, "by my own."

They came in then to tell him that the special train was ready, and he turned, with a somewhat rare formality, to shake Tinker by the hand.

"I thought," he said, "that I had had to sacrifice you, my lad. If that had been so—"

Blake did not complete his sentence—

perhaps found it impossible; but Tinker understood. They gripped in silence, and parted.

When the mysterious personage called Number 2A received the satinwood box he said, without excitement:

"This is satisfactory. Number Twelve."

Such was Blake's only reward.

Claude Tattersal received a comparatively short term of imprisonment, which was subsequently still further reduced, and returned, when he regained his freedom, to his South American home.

The unscrupulous villain who engineered the Tea Tragedies suffered the fate he had so deeply deserved.

About the same time a certain Norfolk paper published full and exclusive details of the operations on Eastbourne Downs at least twelve hours before the London dailies acquired the same information; and Tinker, whose business it was to read most papers of any standing published in the English language, saw therein the hand of Sexton Blake.

"The guv'nor," he said, "is a sport, and no mistake. Fancy him remembering that reporter chap!"

The reporter's comment was to the same effect.

THE END.



A brilliant new Serial of Gun-running Adventure on the Essex coast, by - - - - - H. W. TWYMAN.

"We Shall Beat 'Em Yet!"

"WHAT'S to do, Jim?" asked Bob in a low tone. "Shall we tackle 'em? How do we stand? We've only two guns between the three of us. I suppose they didn't present you with one, skipper?" he added to Joe Juniper.

The latter shook his head, smiling.

"There's seven of 'em aboard," he said. "All of 'em with guns."

"Only six now!" corrected Bob grimly. "But, still, that's too many. We can't take 'em by surprise this time, I reckon."

"But, I say, Bob," put in Jim, "let's try it. If we could bring it off we'd round up the whole—"

"Right!" agreed Bob eagerly. "I was hoping you'd—"

Even as he was about to hoist himself aboard by the Vanderveelde's enormous rudder, which he was gripping to steady the boat, the tramping of booted feet told that the men from the cabin had ascended to the deck, now thoroughly alarmed and aware that something was wrong. The wandering words of their chief had ceased now, and Griff was snarling out curt orders as he urged his men up the companion, his normal calm regained.

"Quick! We'll have to clear out!" snapped Bob. "The painter, Jim!"

Jim Polden was the nearest to the stem of the motor-boat, and he snatched at the rope by which it was made fast to some inaccessible cleat on the lemmersak's deck. Bob stood up as his cousin pulled it towards them, sawed through it so as to retain as much as possible, and gripped the end, taking a turn round a cleat.

There were renewed shouts from up above. The party of gun-runners had discovered that their dinghy, which had been made fast amidships on the port side, had vanished.

"Pull like mad!" whispered Bob.

The commotion shifted to the sounds of boots on deck-planks as the men rushed towards the stern, stumbling against one another and cursing at the fog.

They arrived just in time to see the motor-boat, a dim patch, only a little less white than the mist itself, vanishing into obscurity, towed in little jerks by an even vaguer dinghy, in which sat three figures.

There was a pause of astonishment. Then—

Bang!

Bang—bang!

Somebody aboard had awakened to the fact that they were marooned aboard the Vanderveelde, and that their only small craft were disappearing before their eyes.

Fog is bad for shooting, but the range was almost point-blank. The first two bullets whanged against something in the motor-boat astern; the third plopped into the water alongside Joe Juniper and besprinkled him plentifully.

With every pull on the oars, Bob looking back, saw the rounded stern of the gun-runners' ship melting into the haze. Soon it had gone, but they were only twenty feet away, and the shots still came unpleasantly close.

At a motion from Bob's arm Jim swung the boat's head round sharply and sheered off at right angles, to starboard, the motor-boat astern following unwillingly in their wake. This manoeuvre had the desired effect, for the shots still continued on their old line of flight away to port.

A minute's quiet and steady pulling brought them to the shoaling water near the eastern side of the inlet, at which they had originally arrived in their dinghy from the Happy Days. Here Bob gave the signal to "Easy all," and the boat, with the dead weight astern, stopped almost immediately.

They now knew their approximate position, but they had yet to get back to their base and safety. Should they miss their direction in the fog they might easily steer away from it, or even blunder into the gun-runners.

Hauling on the motor-boat's painter, which he had made fast aboard, Bob clambered over her bow and crawled along the half-deck into the well.

Everything was in order so far as he could see, and the boat must have been just as Smirnov had left her when he boarded the Vanderveelde, save that a water-breaker showed a couple of jagged holes—souvenirs of the parting shots from the crew of the Dutch boat.

Bob was not an expert in the matter of motors, but after a few minutes' pottering round he managed to grasp the idea of the simple controls. The tank, as he found when he used the dipping-rod, was more than half full, but he foraged around until he found a can of petrol for 'ard, which he emptied in on top of what was there. The water and oil supplies he attended to in the same manner—in case.

"No need to pull back now, Jim!" he

called exultantly. "We'll go home in style! Pile aboard here, you two!"

Without the least hesitation in the world Jim and the skipper of the Happy Days did so, making fast the painter of the dinghy astern and thus reversing the order of the procession.

"I say, this is a fine craft!" exclaimed Jim admiringly, glancing around at the boat's businesslike fittings and general roominess.

"Yes, it seems very different to us from what it did the last time we took a trip in her," replied Bob, bending down over the engine. "We came as unwilling passengers, after we were slugged by that precious crowd in Colchester, if you remember. But perhaps you don't; you were dead to the world with a dent in your head that must have felt as big as a saucer—sandbagged, you know. Can you see anything that looks like a starting-handle? Ah, here we are!"

He had lifted off a small lid or hatch on the motor-casing, and as he spoke the crank of which he was in search was revealed. Four or five hefty swings at this had the desired effect, and the staunch Thornycroft engine awoke to life with a suddenness that startled them, and with a low, deep roar that told of the possibilities of immense power and speed. Whoever had bought this craft for the gang must have known a good boat when he saw one, for the lines of her were as speedy as the engine was powerful.

The noise brought an immediate response from the Vandervelde. A hoarse shout of anger came to them from the further side of the creek, where the Dutch boat lay hidden in the fog only a few fathoms away. Then a perfect fusillade of bullets spat spitefully past, over, and under them, most of which missed. One or two struck the dinghy astern, though; which, considering the conditions, was good shooting.

The invaders sent yelps and laughs of derision back by way of answer, with the deep, rolling voice of Joe Juniper as an accompaniment—just to show them, as he explained, that he wasn't dead yet.

Then, with Bob cautiously slipping in the clutch and opening the throttle, they moved forward slowly aboard their prize, with the gun-runners' dinghy in tow. They were legitimate spoils of war, cut out from beneath the enemy's noses in the best style of the old-time pirates.

"Steady, Bob!" warned Jim. "Don't pile us up; we'll be out of the creek in no time. How are we going to get back? What about a compass?"

"All complete," answered his cousin gaily, as he held out a small prismatic instrument. "It was on the thwart here, just where he left it. Jim, you'd better get up for'ard in the bows and keep a look-out, in case we might hit anything. I'm only going to push her along dead slow."

Bob Castle, with his hand on the tiller and his attention concentrated on the compass, felt in high spirits. In the jubilation of their capture, and in the knowledge of the fact that they had effectually marooned the gang aboard their craft with no means of reaching the shore, he had for the moment overlooked the chief object of their raid—the rescue of Jim's father.

Nor had they, since the discovery that it was Captain Joe Juniper they were rescuing, and not Old John, been allowed the leisure to speculate as to whys and wherefores. Things had been altogether too brisk to indulge in guess-

work, and, since they had been assured by Joe Juniper himself that no other captive was aboard, they had no motive in remaining, for it would be hopeless now to try and round up the whole gang by means of a surprise attack.

It was not till they were safely out of the tortuous creek—having had two narrow escapes of running aground in the process—and were headed north-east down the deep main channel towards the Happy Days, that Bob relaxed his strained attention and began a rapid fire of questions that would no longer be bottled up to the older man at his side.

"Skipper, how did you come aboard there? We expected to find Jim's father. We thought you'd gone back to Harwich, as Mr. Peeke told us at Merwell. We—"

"Easy, youngster!" protested the skipper, with one of his deep chuckles. "One at a time! One at a time! I'll tell ye all about it when we're well out of this. Ye haven't got a plug of bacca about ye, now?"

"Not here," replied Bob. "There's some aboard the Happy Days. How was it they got hold of you? And do you think that Old John—"

"Starboard! Starboard!" came a sudden cry from Jim, up in the bows.

Mechanically Bob shifted the tiller, and avoided disaster in the shape of a big mooring-buoy dead under their bows that would have started a plank, slow as they were going, or perhaps smashed the propeller.

At that Bob resolved to reserve his questions for a more fitting opportunity. The only need for caution now was that of avoiding collisions and running aground. The journey back to the yacht lacked the sense of high adventure that filled them when they groped their way into the enemy's stronghold in the crawling dinghy, but they had the exhilaration of achievement—of a job well done—that was only marred by the sobering doubt as to the fate of Jim's father.

But that, perforce, must wait for the moment. They must make all speed back to the Happy Days and hold a council of war. The fog still held thick and opaque, but Bob drove the boat at what was almost a reckless pace, his attention fixed on his steering and the prismatic compass that lay beside him, relying on the wavering needle to keep them in the deep channel, and on the alertness of his cousin in the bows.

And, as the stem of the throbbing craft split the mist, Joe Juniper looked at the unconscious helmsman with kindly, twinkling eyes, silently approving his seamanship and the sure signs of pluck and resource in the characterful young face and the sturdy brown hand that grasped the tiller.

"You'll do," he thought to himself. "We'll beat 'em yet!"

Strategy—and an Explosion!

TRUE to his trust, young Tommy Cobbin loyally carried out his orders about banging on a tin pan. The unmusical sound of it was, indeed, the only thing which could have guided them back to their floating home in that white wilderness of fog, and even with its aid the Happy Days was hard to find, for first the resonant clanging appeared to come first from one direction and then another.

However, after three swift changes of direction the grey silhouette of the

yacht emerged from the mist with the usual suddenness, and Bob brought the prize with its captured dinghy in tow alongside.

"Ahoy!" came the shrill voice of the boy. "Who're you?"

Then Jim, who had been casting loose a coiled rope at the bows, stood upright, and at the same moment Bob in the stern became visible. Tommy gaped with surprise, and let go his hold of the backstay he was holding and nearly fell overboard.

When he had first seen these strange craft he had naturally imagined that some stranger had come alongside, mistaking his tin-banging for a signal of distress; when he saw his two shipmates, and realised that the pair who had departed with a dinghy had returned with a huge power-boat, he could hardly believe his eyes, and his face was eloquent with unasked questions.

"Yes, it's us, Tommy!" called Jim cheerily. "You're bursting to know, but we'll tell you later. Catch hold here and make fast to the bits." He flung the coil of rope to the boy as he spoke, and bade him pass it along outside the shrouds and make fast forward as a towing-hawser. The sails of the Happy Days, useless in the present calm, could now be superseded by the engine of Smirnov's motor-boat should it be necessary to get out to sea quickly, as it was should the fog be dispersed by a wind.

That was the first precaution ere holding the urgent council of war in the yacht's cabin; a surprise seemed improbable, but they were not going to neglect to guard against it.

The making fast of the hawser kept Tommy Cobbin occupied for a few minutes, and in the meantime Joe Juniper had cast off the dinghy and made it fast astern. When the boy returned aft and came face to face with his old skipper, his mouth dropped open even wider than it had when he beheld the motor-boat.

"Hallo, Tommy!" chuckled Juniper. "Didn't expect to see me, I lay! And I didn't expect to see you, either."

"No, skipper," said the boy stammeringly. "Where have you all sprung from? And the boat—"

"No inquests yet, you two," said Bob Castle, grinning and coming along the deck. "Below, all of you, for a bit of grub and the court of inquiry. Tommy, get busy with something to eat—we're hungry!"

He shoos them towards the scuttle, and first the boy and then Joe lowered themselves into the tiny cabin, to be followed by Jim and Bob, who had seen that everything was in order and all made fast.

"That's the style, lads," said Joe Juniper, his smiling face wrinkling with one of his habitual chuckles and his huge hands slapping together heartily. "Give your orders! You're skipper here now. And I must say I like the way ye're managing everything, an' all. It suits me fine to be a passenger aboard. Ye've got everything very shipshape, I see, but ye seem to be carrying a lot of dunnage. What's this, eh?"

He bent down and tugged at the paper covering of one of the several packages that were stowed at the foot of the sleeping berths for lack of room elsewhere.

"Rockets," said Bob briefly. "We got a lot of stuff in Harwich, in case we could put it to any use some way or other."

"Rockets, eh?" said Joe Juniper.

"Why?"

"Jump about with the grub there, Tommy!" called Bob towards the forepeak. "Don't stop to make anything hot. Rout out some cold tack. Now, skipper, sit ye down on the port locker with Jim. Tommy and I will take the starboard. We can talk while we're eating—or, better still, start in now."

"Now, skipper," he said, "let's get down to brass tacks. The fog might be lifting, and we've got to get busy and think out our next move." He reached up to the rack that was fitted to the forward end of the cabin and took down a chart, which he opened and spread on the table between them.

"Here we are," he said, putting his finger on the spot where they lay at the entrance to the creek, "this is their only way out. They've got to pass us if they want to get into the open. Now what use can we make of that?"

"Not much, maybe," grunted Joe Juniper, "seein' the channel's half a mile wide at low water. If they were minded they could sneak out a couple o' fathoms away from us in this weather."

"But there's no wind," objected Jim. "She's got sail, remember, and—"

"Huh!" ejaculated Joe. "She's got auxiliary power, too, if that's news to ye."

"Power!" gasped Jim incredulously. The two cousins looked at each other blankly. This news, if it were true, altogether altered the complexion of the situation. If Griff decided to go after the daring invaders who had despoiled him of his dinghy and a costly motor-boat, he could do so now without waiting for a wind. The only things against it were the size of the Vanderveelde and the big risk of piling her up on some sandbank in the fog. Against that was the equally big risk that while the

crew of the Happy Days was free danger ever lurked at the elbows of Griff & Co.

Actually, the reason for the non-appearance of the Vanderveelde—which could have arrived by this time had Griff taken the chance of pushing her through the fog—was quite a different one. They were engaged in a search for Maxim Smirnov. They believed that he had merely gone overboard, but he was dead in the ooze of the inlet's floor even as they sought.

"We've got to think what we would do in their place," said Bob. "Question is: Are they going to try and get us, or go all out to get away themselves? What about their gun-running? Are they going to try another trip to the derelict with another consignment, or not? But, I say, skipper, you've had the benefit of their company since we have. Maybe you've heard something? And how was it they got hold of you, anyway?"

"Maybe I was waiting for a chance to tell you," retorted Joe, puffing out a cloud of pungent smoke and wrinkling his eyes up again with another chuckle. "You've had so much to say, I haven't had a chance to get a word in edgewise."

"Guilty, my lord!" pleaded Bob, in mock humility.

"Ye remember I left Mr. Peeke and the

pair of ye at Merwell to go home to Harwich?" continued the skipper. "Well, that's how 'twas. I went to the inn there, the Keteh, to have a drop of something to warm me for the journey, and I got talking to the man who keeps the place. We got on all right, and after a time another man came up and joined us. He was the fellow you had the fight with, Bob Castle—the man who was standing on deck after I was lowered into the dinghy back yonder on the Vanderveelde."

"Maxim Smirnov," said Bob.

"Was that the name of him? Well, no matter. As I was saying, he joined in, and after a bit I began to feel drowsy—and that's the last I remember. Next thing, I woke up on his motor-boat, and hours after that we arrived in these parts."

"I heard Smirnov reporting to Griff that 'knock-out' drops had been put in somebody's drink," interposed Bob. "He said that he had been asking too many questions. That was you, of course, for you were the prisoner, and it was you he was talking about. But he had found some papers—he said you were a coastguard. That's what made me think it was Jim's father they had in that cabin. And where is Jim's father, anyway? And are you a coastguard?"

"Easy—easy!" protested Joe Juniper smilingly. "One at a time. I am a coastguard, my boy. I'm an officer in the Preventive Service, and stationed at Harwich. I thought I was safe, but they must have recognised me somehow; perhaps they've got their spies all along this coast. But I was expecting trouble—or prepared for it, anyways, and I was able to pass the word along. I'd heard enough, by putting one thing alongside another, to have an idea from their talk what was happening hereabouts, and I managed to write a little note and stick it on the underside of one of the tables in the bar with a morsel of chewed-up bread."

"And it was found by—" began Bob eagerly.

"By my owner, Mr. Peeke," said Joe, nodding sagely, pausing to light up his pipe again. "Then: 'We'd arranged it in case of accidents, ye'll understand.'"

(Continued overleaf.)

Result of Football Competition No. 12.

Matches played, Saturday, Jan. 17th, 1925.
£250 WON.

In this contest two competitors correctly forecast the results of all the matches on the coupon. The Prize of £250 has therefore been divided between the following:

J. C. COLLINS, 1, "O" Block, The Avenue, Ebury Bridge, Pimlico, S.W. 1.
E. W. PAVITT, 7, Canada Terrace, Epping, Essex.

MUST BE WON!

£300

MUST BE WON!

REMARKABLE FOOTBALL OFFER.

Ten Results Only—No Goals Required—No Entrance Fee—Open to Scottish and Irish Readers.

Here you have a coupon containing TEN matches to be played on SATURDAY, MARCH 14th, and £300 will be paid for the correct or most nearly correct forecast of the results of all these matches. All that competitors have to do is to strike out, IN INK, the names of the teams they think will lose. If, in the opinion of the competitor, any match, or matches, will be drawn, the names of both teams should be left untouched.

Coupons, which must NOT be enclosed in envelopes containing efforts in other competitions, must be addressed to:

FOOTBALL COMPETITION No. 16.
Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

and must reach that address not later than the FIRST POST on FRIDAY, MARCH 13th.

RULES WHICH MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.

1. All forecasts must be made on coupons taken from this journal, or from any of the issues of the journals which contain the announcement of the competition.
2. Any alteration or mutilation of the coupon will disqualify the effort. When more than one effort is submitted coupons must not be pinned or in any other way fastened together.
3. If any match, or matches, on the coupon should be abandoned, or full time is not played for any reason, such match, or matches, will not be taken into consideration in the adjudication.
4. In the event of ties, the prize will be divided, but no competitor will be awarded more than one share of the prize.
5. No correspondence will be allowed, neither will interviews be granted.
6. The Editor reserves the right to disqualify any coupon for what, in his opinion, is good and sufficient reason, and it is a distinct condition of entry that the Editor's decision shall be accepted as final and legally binding in all matters concerning this competition.
7. All entries must be sent through the post, and any received after the FIRST POST on FRIDAY, MARCH 13th, will be disqualified. No responsibility can be accepted for any effort, or efforts, lost, mislaid, or delayed. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery. Unstamped or insufficiently stamped efforts will be refused.

This competition is run in conjunction with "Answers," "Family Journal," "Home Companion," "Home Stories," "Woman's World," "Boys' Realm," "Football and Sports Favourite," "Pictorial Magazine," "Triumph," "Sports Budget," "The Champion," and "All Sports Weekly."

Employees of the proprietors of these journals are not eligible to compete.

U.J.

Football Competition No. 16.

Matches played, SATURDAY, MARCH 14th, 1925.

Closing date, FRIDAY, MARCH 13th, 1925.

CARDIFF CITY	v. NOTTS FOREST
TOTTENHAM H.	v. HUDDERSFIELD T.
LEEDS UNITED	v. SHEFFIELD UNITED
MANCHESTER UTD.	v. PORTSMOUTH
SOUTHAMPTON	v. DERBY CO.
COVENTRY CITY	v. BARNLEY
BRENTFORD	v. SWANSEA TOWN
LUTON TOWN	v. MERTHYR TOWN
SWINDON TOWN	v. NEWPORT CO.
NEW BRIGHTON	v. ASHINGTON

I enter FOOTBALL CONTEST No. 16 in accordance with the Rules and Conditions as announced, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and legally binding.

Name.....

Address

16

"I remember he told us he'd been 'shoopin' around' at the Ketch when we went aboard the Happy Days after we'd found the letter in the pocket of my father's coat," chimed in Jim. "But how was it that you'd arranged it if—"

"I'll tell ye everything in full when we've more time," said Joe. "We're not out of the wood yet. If this fog lifts—"

He stretched out his hand and took the chart. With the disclosures he had just made he seemed imperceptibly to have assumed a different attitude; he seemed somehow to have automatically taken the reins.

"Now, lads," he went on, "this is how the land lies. In my way of thinking, 'They're cooped up in this creek so far as their craft is concerned, but they can get to Walton by the backwater in the dinghy.'"

"But it's capsize!" objected Bob, and went on to explain what had happened as the result of Smirnov's going overboard.

"No matter," resumed the older man. "It won't sink. They can right it and bale it out. If they think we've got support, or

that we can trap them in this channel, they might make a bolt of it, and scatter. I don't think they will, but they might. So long as the fog lasts they'll be uneasy, though. They're takin' mighty risks, and might be weakening. 'Agen, they might try to force their way out with the Vandervelde all complete by this channel here. They know our strength, and they've only three to cope with. Likely it'll be that, and they'll wait till the fog lifts. They're the rats in a hole, d'ye see, and we're the cats outside.

"Now, what I'd do is to stop both their holes, back and front. My notion is for you to get round to Walton, Bob, in the motorboat, seeing that you can manage her. Tommy'll go with ye, and Jim and I will stay here to do whatever we can. What d'ye say to that?"

They both had something to add to the suggestion, but the broad idea was agreed to, and after a bit of discussion, mainly as to the details as to what Bob should do in the way of informing the Walton police and blocking the gun-runners' getaway at the railway-station and by warning all the garage-

keepers in town, they proceeded to put their intentions into immediate effect.

The fog, they saw when they emerged on deck, was already lifting, and the atmosphere was perceptibly clearer, though visibility was only slowly improving. The motor-boat was already prepared for the journey, and after a snack Bob and Tommy Cobbin climbed down into the sternsheets, and, with a wave of farewell, cast off. Then the powerful engine sputtered, burst into a steady roar, and with a gradually diminishing throbbing faded away into the thinning mist.

They had been gone only ten minutes, and the two guardians of the Happy Days had just decided on their plans of defence should they be necessary, when the tiny cabin in which they sat shuddered to the dull roar of an explosion. The air seemed to be filled with blinding light—their world to have gone up in flame. They were hurled violently backwards against the cabin walls, dazed, stunned, overwhelmed by that shattering crash.

(A very exciting instalment next week. Book your copy!)

JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.

THE FINEST CAREER FOR BRITISH BOYS.

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches). Ages 15½ to 16½ years.

Men also are required for

STOKERS Age 18 to 25
ROYAL MARINE FORCES " 17 " 23

GOOD PAY. ALL FOUND.
EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR PROMOTION.

Apply by letter to the Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. & R.M., 5, Suffolk Street, Birmingham; 151, Victoria Street, Bristol; 55, Whitehall, London, S.W.1; 250, Deansgate, Manchester; 116, Row Hill, Newcastle-on-Tyne; or 6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park, Southampton.

YOURS for 6^D 18-ct. GOLD-CASED KEYLESS LEVER WATCH

Get the full-sized 18-ct. gold-cased keyless lever watch, carefully adjusted lever movement, clear bold dial, best crystal glass. Handsome watch, designed for hard wear and accurate timekeeping. Fully guaranteed 5 years.

FREE . . . Handsome pocket-to-pocket Albert FREE with every watch.

We send this watch post paid upon receipt of 6d. only. After receiving the watch, if satisfied, the balance is payable 2/- on receipt and 2/- monthly until 20/- is paid. Full cash with order (on balance within 7 days), 18/- only. Send 6d. to-day to—**SIMPSON'S, LTD.** (Dept. 932), 94, Queen's Rd., BRIGHTON.



FREE GIFT

The "SILKRITE" Registered Self-filling Fountain Pen
Over 5,000 Testimonials received! Guaranteed 5 Years' Wear!

1/6

of OPERA GLASSES

to all Buying TWO PENS!



M. G. FRANCIS, Esq., writes: "65 Pens have I purchased, and all my friends are perfectly satisfied." G. G. POWELL, Esq., writes: "Delighted with 'Silkrite' Pen. It equals any other make at 10/-." FREE GIFT of 10 PIECE TOOL SET in WOOD CASE TO ALL sending P.O. 1/6 for Pen, and Postage 2d. FREE GIFT of OPERA GLASSES in CASE, powerful lens, telescopic adjusting, TO ALL sending P.O. 3/- for 2 "Silkrite" Pens, and 3d. for Postage! (Write for 1925 Illustrated Catalogue full of Bargains, Jewellery, Fancy Goods, Post Free!—THE LEEDS BARGAIN CO. (U.K.), 31, KENDAL LANE, LEEDS.

MY GREAT OFFER

I supply the finest Coventry built cycles, ON 14 DAYS' APPROVAL, PACKED FREE AND CARRIAGE PAID on receipt of a small deposit. Lowest cash prices, or easy payment terms. Write for Free Bargain Lists NOW.

O'Brien THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER
518 COVENTRY.

PP. MITAL TWEEZERS THE "QUALITY" PACKET 100 GUMMED TITLES OF COUNTRIES NEVER FAILS. Full particulars and Testimonials, stamp.—**MELVIN STRONG, Ltd.** (Dept. S.), 10, Lodgegate Hill, London, E.C.4.

HEIGHT INCREASED IN 30 DAYS. 5/- Complete Course.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting. The Melvin Strong System NEVER FAILS. Full particulars and Testimonials, stamp.—**Melvin Strong, Ltd.** (Dept. S.), 10, Lodgegate Hill, London, E.C.4.

STOP STAMMERING!

Cure yourself as I did. Particulars. Free.—**P. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1.**

FREE FUN!

Ventriloquist's Instruments given FREE to all sending Gd. P.O. for Sample Magic Trick and Illus. Catalogue. Large Parcel Magic Tricks, etc., 2/6, 5/-. Six Amusing Novelties, 1/6.—**P. FEARING, Travancore, Colwyn Bay.**

VEST POCKET FOLDER PACKET STAMP MOUNTS

50. DIF. FINE STAMPS. All free to genuine applicants for BLUE LABEL APPROVALS No. 6, sending postage.—**B. L. CORYN, 10, Waverley, Walsley, Kent.**

HEIGHT INCREASED 3 to 5 ins. without appliances, drugs, or dieting. Complete Course, 5/-

The "Clive" System never fails.—**C. CLIVE, 8, Seaford Road, Colwyn Bay.** [Particulars, testimonials, stamp]

WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER.
NN

HEIGHT COUNTS

In winning success. Let the Girvan System increase your height. Wonderful results. Send P.C. for particulars and our £100 guarantee to Enquiry Dept. A.M.P., 17, Strand Great Road, London, N.4.

HAVE YOU A RED NOSE?

Send a stamp to pay postage, and you will learn how to rid yourself of such a terrible affliction free of charge. Enclose stamp.

Address in confidence: **T. J. TEMPLE, Specialist, "PALACE HOUSE," 128, SHAFTESBURY AVE., LONDON, W.1.**

SPLENDID CHANCES FOR BOYS

(ages 14 to 19)
CANADA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND
Free Farm Training. Generous financial assistance towards passage and outfit, repayable by easy instalments when in work overseas.
APPLY: THE SALVATION ARMY EMIGRATION DEPT., Please quote this paper. **3, UPPER THAMES STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.**

CUT THIS OUT

"The Union Jack." **PEN COUPON.** Value 2d.
Send 7 of these coupons with only 2/6 direct to the Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet Street, E.C.4. You will receive by return a splendid British-made 14ct. gold-nibbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6 (one, medium, or broad nib). If only one coupon is sent the price is 3/9, 2d. being allowed for each extra coupon up to 6. (Pocket Clip, 4d.) Satisfaction guaranteed or cash returned. Special New Offer—Your own name in gilt letters on either pen for 1/- extra.

Lever Self-Filling Model with Safety Cap, 2/- extra.
28-2-25